CATHAY PACIFIC ARIA SUITE REVIEW / **GO WEST IN HONG KONG**

BUSINESS TRAVELLER

ASIA-PACIFIC

May/June 2025

IDEAS THAT MOVE YOU

GO WILD

EXPLORING INDONESIA'S BACKYARD

SAF NOT SORRY

FUELLING THE AIRLINE BUSINESS

OUT OF OFFICE

DOES WORKING FROM HOME WORK?

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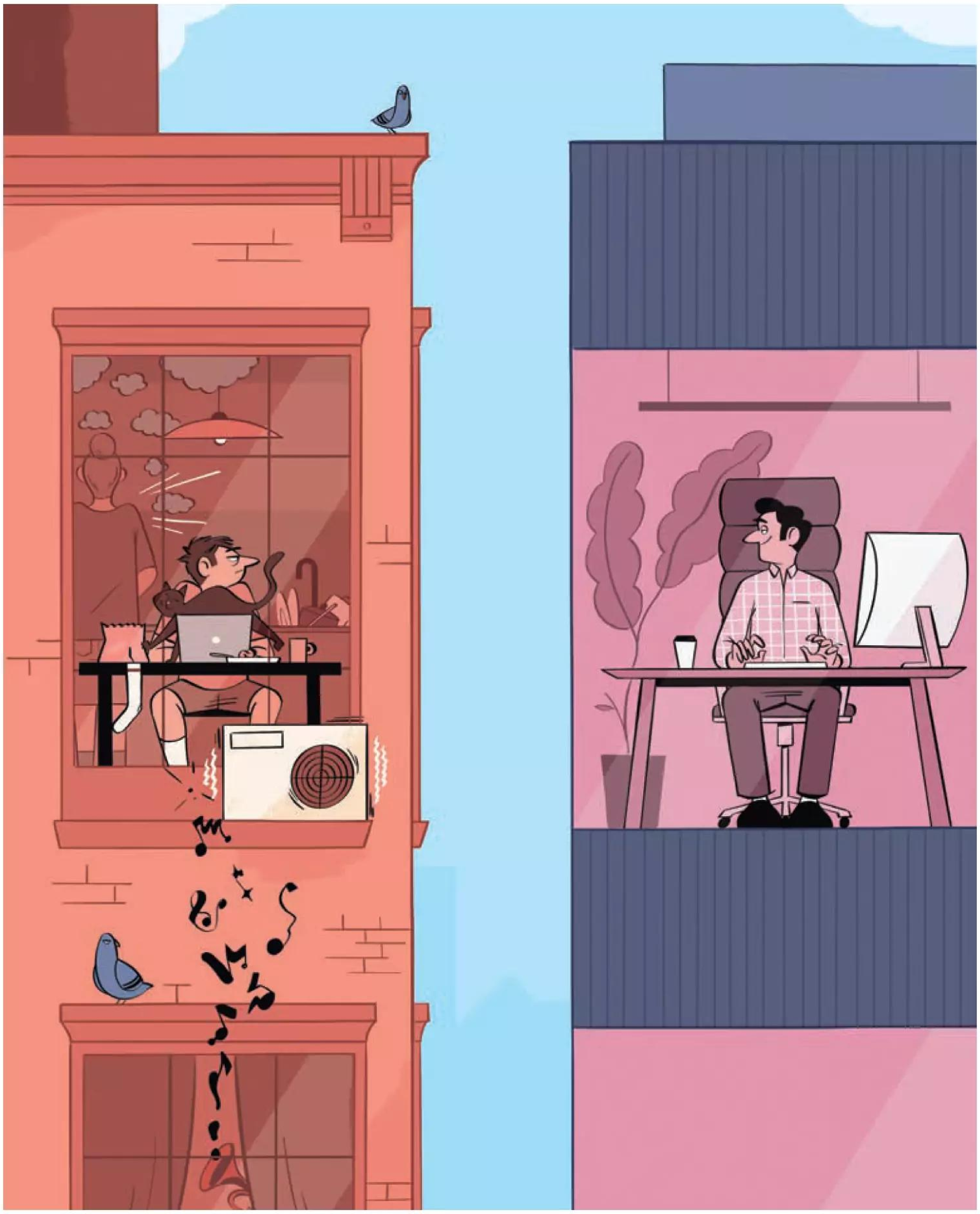

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EDITOR'S LETTER

MANY OF YOU will have been to Indonesia. And many of you will have been no further than Jakarta: an air-conditioned journey from the airport to the hotel through busy streets, another trip to the place of business, a night at the hotel – and then back to the airport again. And that's a real shame. The country beyond its hectic cities is rugged, jaw-droppingly spectacular and utterly beguiling. It's a nation of superlatives: more than 17,500 islands, the highest number of active volcanoes on the planet, and the world's fourth-largest population. It's also a relatively new country, founded in 1945.

In this issue, our writer Steve White explores the wilder side of Indonesia by using four of its main cities as bases from which to explore. The country is within easy reach of major business hubs such as Hong Kong, Singapore, KL and Bangkok, so there's really no excuse not to stay on for a while when business is done, or to head there for a holiday.

We also take a look at three cities in Australia – Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. All are compelling in their own way, and all are great places to work, rest and play. Just don't forget how huge the continent is: as the cockatoo flies, Perth is closer to Jakarta than it is to Sydney.

Finally, the Business Traveller Awards are back in October and celebrate the best in the world of travel and hospitality, whether it be airports, hotels, airlines, loyalty programmes or cities. This year – and for the first time – comes the Best in the World category, chosen by a panel of industry experts after submissions from you, our readers. Your opinions matter to us, so be sure to vote: you'll find the details on page 10.

Happy travels.

Nick Goodyer
Editor

CONTRIBUTORS

RICHARD LORD
Richard is a freelance journalist based in Hong Kong. He is a former editor at the *Wall Street Journal* and was also editorial director of Haymarket Publishing Asia. On page 64 he takes a good, hard look at the topic of working from home, where we learn what bosses and their employees really think about it – and whether or not it's productive.

CARMEN JENNER
Carmen lives in Perth, Australia. She's a freelance travel writer who has written for numerous magazines, newspapers and blogs around the globe. She also runs the *Fluffy Towel Travel* blog, for travellers who love fluffy towels as much as their discoveries. On page 68 she guides us on a grand tour of three Australian cities.

STEVE WHITE
Steve is a Hong Kong-based journalist and intrepid traveller with more than 25 years' experience editing and writing for a range of publications in Asia. He's also a former editor of adventure travel magazine *Action Asia*. In this issue (page 44) he examines the wilder side of Indonesia, a country he loves and knows well.

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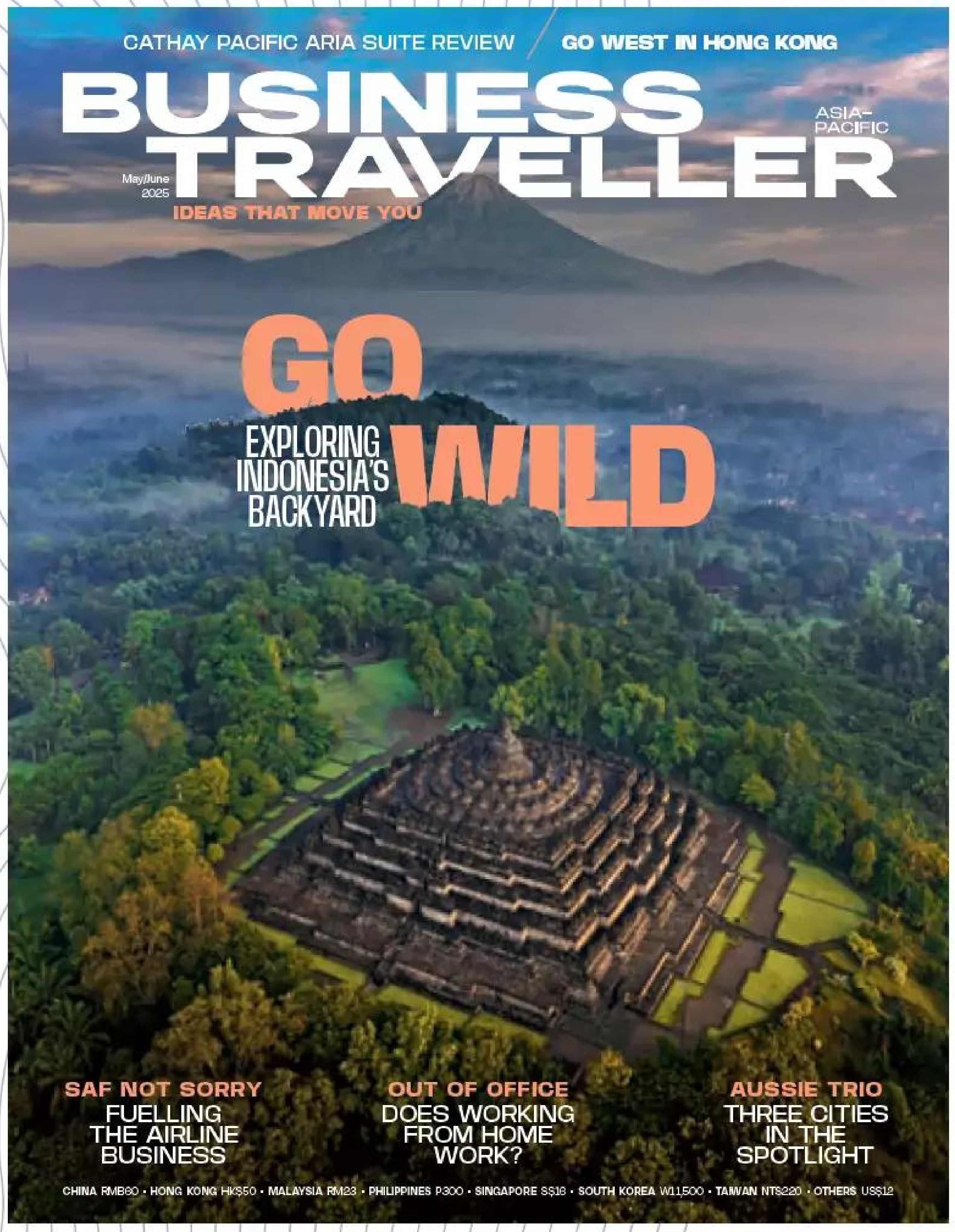
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EDITORIAL
EDITOR NICK GOODYER
CREATIVE DIRECTOR TAN PARMAR
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ART DIRECTOR ANNIE HARRIS
PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR TRACEY GRIFFIN
PICTURE EDITOR KATIE BYRNE
CONSUMER EDITOR ALEX MCWHIRTER
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR MORGAN REES

CONTRIBUTORS DAN BOOTH, HANNAH BRANDLER, TAMSIN COCKS, ALESANDRA DUBIN, CHRIS DWYER, JT GENTER, TAMARA HINSON, LAUREL IVES, CARMEN JENNER, JAKE JONES, RICHARD LORD, ENRIQUE PERRELLA, DAN ROSS, EDWARD RUSSELL, LAUREN SMITH, ANDREAS SPAETH, JEREMY TAYLOR, JEFF WALLACH, STEVE WHITE

ADVERTISING
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TRAVEL MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS APAC SITI SALEHA (SAL)
TRAVEL MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS APAC KEH AN FAMATIGA
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT LEAD FERDI FEVIDAL

ADMINISTRATION
CIRCULATION MANAGER ALLAN CHAN
PRODUCTION MANAGER JAMIE HALLING

CONTACT
EMAIL EDITORIAL@BUSINESSTRAVELLER.COM
TWITTER.COM/@BTASIAPACIFIC
FACEBOOK.COM/BUSINESSTRAVELLER.ASIA
INSTAGRAM @BUSINESSTRAVELLERAP

EMAIL ADVERTISING@BUSINESSTRAVELLER.COM

SUBSCRIPTIONS
EMAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS@BUSINESSTRAVELLER.COM

INK
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER MICHAEL KEATING
CHIEF OPERATING AND FINANCIAL OFFICER JIM CAMPBELL
MANAGING DIRECTOR, INK STUDIO JONNY CLARK
HEAD OF FINANCE PHIL MCILWAINE
MANAGING DIRECTOR, BUSINESS TRAVELLER JULIAN GREGORY
COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR DENISE JASCHKE
ACCOUNT LEAD JADE SMITH
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND INNOVATION RIC STOCKFIS

HEADQUARTERS
BUSINESS TRAVELLER MEDIA LTD
INK, BLACKBURN HOUSE, BLACKBURN RD, LONDON, UK, NW6 1RZ

INK PUBLISHING PTE LTD
48 CRAIG ROAD, SINGAPORE 089686

Business Traveller Asia-Pacific® is published six times a year. The magazine is independent of all commercial interests within the travel industry. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be accepted for publication. The opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the publishers, who cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Business Traveller has the following international editions: Asia-Pacific, Germany, India, the Middle East, Netherlands, North America, Poland and the UK. For more information visit businesstraveller.com/our-websites or email enquiries@businesstraveller.com
© 2025 Business Traveller Media – ISSN 0255-7312

Printing by **Apex Print Ltd**
11-13 Dai Kwai Street, Tai Po Industrial Estate,
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Where APAC Millionaires Are Investing in Dubai Right Now

Inside the booming market for branded residences—and the exact buildings attracting Asia's most mobile capital

APAC INVESTORS are no longer observing Dubai's rise—they're fueling it.

In the past year, ultra-high-net-worth buyers from Singapore, Hong Kong, India, and mainland China have become the most active foreign investors in Dubai's branded residences sector.

These aren't ordinary homes. They're real estate vehicles backed by global hospitality brands—offering lifestyle, liquidity, and long-term appreciation in one move.

WHY APAC CAPITAL IS MOVING TO BRANDED RESIDENCES

Brand Equity Drives Resale Performance

Branded residences in Dubai—backed by names like Fairmont, Dorchester Collection, and Baccarat—command premium pricing and maintain stronger resale values than unbranded peers.

Residency Incentive + Capital Security

Dubai offers 10-year Golden Visas tied to property investment, in a jurisdiction known for full ownership rights, capital repatriation, and geopolitical neutrality.

Stronger Returns for Less Capital

Dubai's branded residences start at $900/sq.ft—well below entry points in cities like Hong Kong or Singapore. Investors benefit from high rental yields and attractive long-term appreciation, making it a smart value play with global upside.

Compared to Singapore or Tokyo, Dubai offers **entry at $900/sq.ft**, with higher rental yields and lower transaction costs.

HOME SWEET HOME
The Fairmont Residences Solara Tower - Downtown Dubai

WHERE PRIVACY, SERVICE, AND GLOBAL TRUST INTERSECT
The Triplex Penthouse by Mr. C
15,118 sq.ft | $43M

What APAC Buyers Are Prioritizing in Dubai

Brand pedigree, prime locations, and early access are defining the new acquisition strategy

TOP BRANDED RESIDENCES IN DEMAND

1 Fairmont Residences Solara Tower – Downtown
55-storey landmark with panoramic views of Burj Khalifa and Dubai Canal. Residences feature high-end finishes, rooftop pool, and access to global Accor privileges. A favorite for ROI-focused investors.

2 Mr. C Residences Downtown – Downtown
Modern Italian-inspired living by Cipriani, with refined design and skyline views. Limited inventory and proximity to the Dubai Mall make it a top choice for design-conscious investors.

3 The Alba Dorchester Residences and Resort – Palm Jumeirah
Ultra-luxury beachfront project with only 60 units, blending organic architecture with beachfront serenity. Offers private pools, expansive terraces, and Dorchester-level service.

4 Baccarat Hotel & Residences – Downtown
Twin towers with dramatic facades, branded elegance, and heritage-inspired interiors. Early-phase access sought by UHNW buyers drawn to legacy brand prestige.

TOP LOCATIONS FAVORED BY APAC INVESTORS

Downtown Dubai
Iconic skyline, highest capital appreciation

Dubai Canal
Waterfront prestige with low inventory

Palm Jumeirah
Long-term lifestyle + legacy play

Marasi Drive
Quietly becoming the next ultra-prime corridor

H2 2024 RECORDS

901
USD average price per sq.ft of branded residences

132
Total number of branded residences

81%
Percentage of buyers who are foreign nationals

48%
Increase in sales volume year-on-year

10%
Under construction units are 10% more affordable than ready units

> 'Dubai's real estate market is undergoing a fundamental shift. Branded residences are no longer a niche segment-they have become a core asset class, attracting institutional investors and setting new price benchmarks'

ELIAS HANNOUSH
Managing Director

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Dubai's inspiring skyline hosts a range of exquisite branded residences

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Osaka

The greatest show on Earth heads to town

WORDS **TAMARA HINSON**

OSAKA MIGHT BE famous for its food scene but in 2025 it will be thrust into the spotlight for another reason – Expo 2025, which began in April and finishes on October 13. The event takes place on Osaka's Yumeshima Island, with some 28 million visitors expected to attend. The theme for this year's expo is "Designing Future Society for Our Lives", but what does this entail? Forums and conferences covering everything from AI to sustainable urbanisation (carbon neutrality and digital innovations will be major focuses); a sprawling pavilion area with themed zones dedicated to

IMAGE ©EXPO 2025

Continued from overleaf

saving, empowering and connecting lives; and dozens of individual pavilions built by various countries, regions of Japan and companies such as Mitsubishi and Bandai. One of the most spectacular pavilions is the Red Cross cinema dome, where visitors can learn about the importance of humanitarian aid.

The entire site has been designed with accessibility in mind. It's encircled by a 2km circular Grand Ring, which has been built using timber construction techniques used in Japanese temples. It doubles as a main, covered route for visitors. Electric buses, meanwhile, whisk visitors around the exhibition.

If you're looking for somewhere to stay, then look no further than Hilton's brand-new Waldorf Astoria Osaka, which marked the brand's Japanese debut in April. Located in the city's Umekita District, just steps from the JR Osaka Station, the 252-room hotel features designs by celebrated architect André Fu and promises a medley of stateside art deco aesthetic and Japanese accents – plus four dining venues including an outpost of the New York flagship's Peacock Alley hotspot.

GETTING THERE Shuttle buses run between Osaka International Airport and the expo site, with other efficient public transport options available

OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN
EXPO
2025

TOP: The expo's 2km-Grand Ring **ABOVE:** Waldorf Astoria Osaka

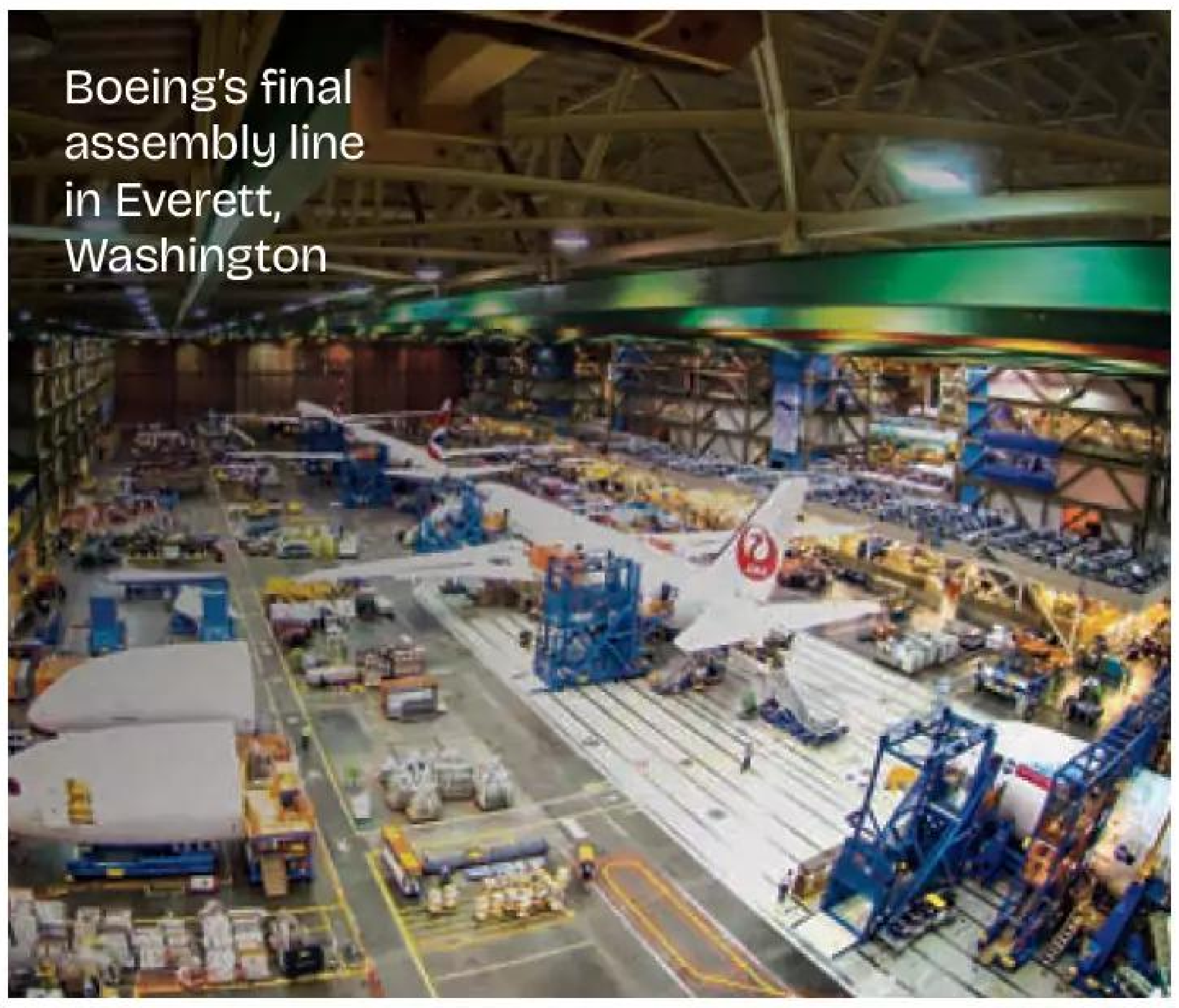
A new day for Boeing?

Although the aircraft producer continues to lag behind Airbus, it may be looking at a brighter future

FOR THE SIXTH year in a row, Airbus has left Boeing in its wake, delivering 766 aircraft in 2024 – more than double Boeing's 348. Once the dominant force in commercial aviation, Boeing now faces a prolonged crisis.

Boeing's difficulties date back to 2019, when two fatal crashes involving the 737 MAX led to a grounding of the aircraft. The company has since grappled with production delays, quality-control issues and financial setbacks, directly affecting airlines worldwide. In early 2024, another crisis struck when an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX suffered a mid-air door plug blowout, further shaking public confidence and prompting regulatory scrutiny.

To address these challenges, Boeing has taken significant steps, including reacquiring Spirit AeroSystems, to regain control over key manufacturing processes. The company also appointed a new CEO, Kelly Ortberg, who is leading an extensive overhaul of Boeing's safety and quality procedures.



Boeing's final assembly line in Everett, Washington

With a backlog of more than 14,000 undelivered aircraft between Airbus and Boeing, the industry faces continued uncertainty. Airlines, particularly US carriers, have had to adjust fleet strategies due to Boeing delays. Delta, for instance, has leaned further into Airbus orders, securing more A350s and A321neos to compensate for the delayed 737 MAX 10.

Boeing's 787 deliveries have also been sluggish, and the long overdue 777X remains uncertified, although test flights have finally resumed.

Despite its challenges, Boeing entered 2025 on a hopeful note, delivering 45 aircraft in January – nearly double the 25 jets it delivered in the same month last year, and even outperforming Airbus for a change.

This surge could suggest Boeing's worst days may be behind it. If the company continues its upward trajectory, regains regulator trust and resolves lingering production issues, 2025 could mark the beginning of a true turnaround for the American aerospace giant.

> 'Boeing entered 2025 on a hopeful note, outperforming Airbus in deliveries in January'

IMAGES ©EXPO 2025, THE BOEING COMPANY/BOB FERGUSON; RIGHT: COURTESY OF THE LOUIE

WORDS
**DAN BOOTH,
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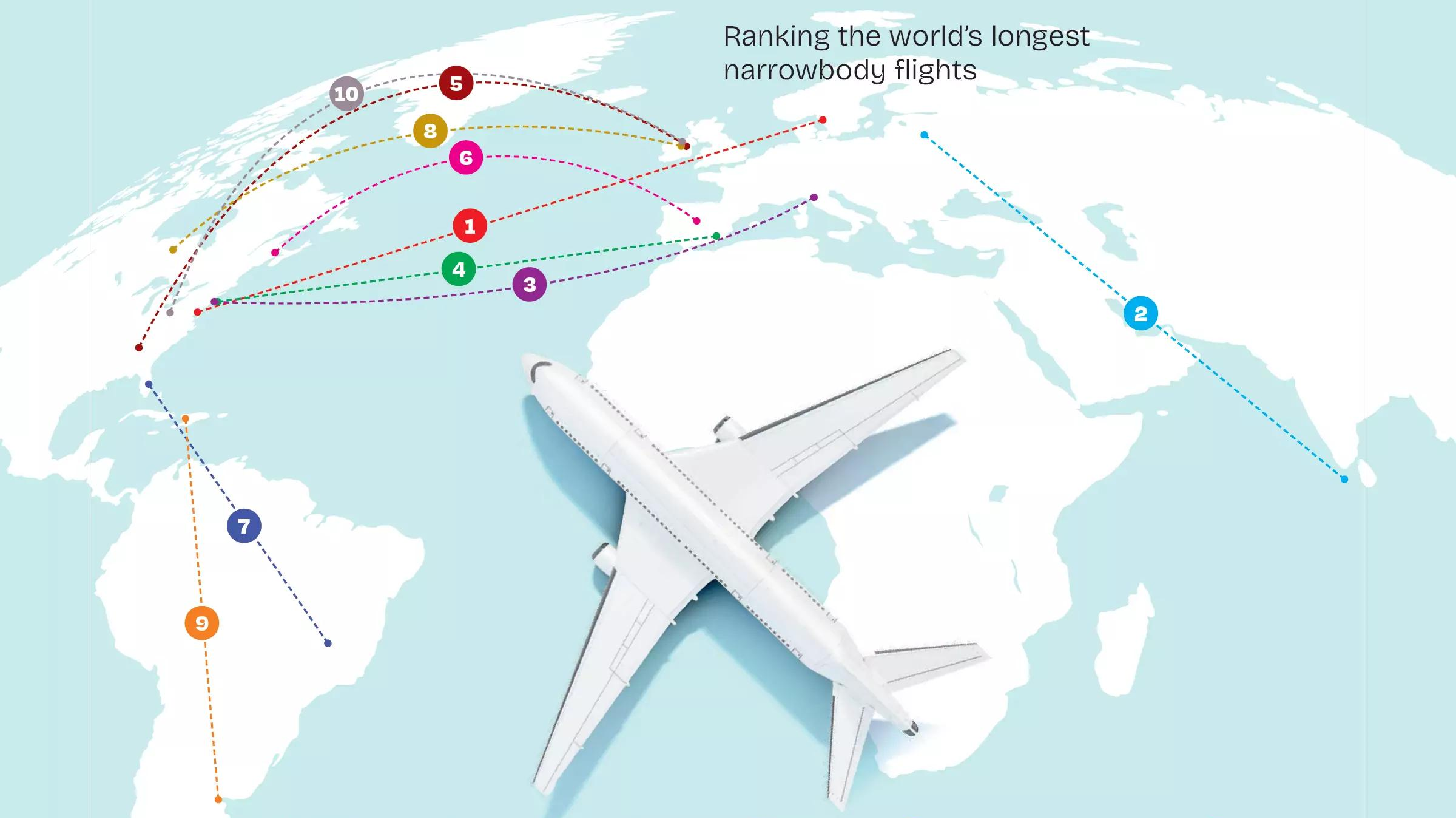
ROUTE MAPS

SLIM PICKINGS

Ranking the world's longest narrowbody flights



FOR DECADES, LONG-HAUL flights were dominated by widebody aircraft, offering greater passenger comfort with spacious cabins and dual aisles. However, the rise of fuel-efficient, long-range, single-aisle jets such as the new Airbus A321XLR is changing that. Airlines are increasingly using these aircraft to operate "long-thin routes", allowing for more point-to-point intercontinental connectivity.

Despite this shift, the venerable Boeing 757 still holds a surprising distinction: it operates the longest narrowbody flight by duration this year. Azur Air's Moscow-Malé route, flown on a 757, takes nine hours and 10 minutes – outpacing the A321LR/XLR routes by a narrow margin.

While these new jets offer efficiency, passenger comfort remains a concern. Widebody jets provide more space and dual aisles for easier movement as well as larger lavatories, making long-haul flights more bearable. Narrowbodies, on the other hand, come with tighter seating, single aisles that can cause congestion and smaller overhead bins.

Airlines are also improving amenities – adding lie-flat business class seats and upgraded inflight entertainment systems – but for economy passengers, spending up to nine hours in a single-aisle jet may still be an adjustment. Here is a ranking of the world's longest narrowbody flights you can expect – and maybe avoid – this year.

1
Copenhagen (CPH) – Washington Dulles (IAD)
SAS – Airbus A321LR
4,074 miles / 9h 05m

2
Moscow Vnukovo (VKO) – Malé, Maldives (MLE)
Azur Air – Boeing 757-200
4,072 miles / 9h 10m

3
Newark (EWR) – Milan Malpensa (MXP)
La Compagnie – Airbus A321LR
4,010 miles / 8h 55m

4
Newark (EWR) – Nice (NCE)
La Compagnie – Airbus A321LR
4,007 miles / 8h 30m

5
Dublin (DUB) – Nashville (BNA)
Aer Lingus – Airbus A321XLR
3,897 miles / 8h 15m

6
Madrid (MAD) – Washington Dulles (IAD)
Iberia – Airbus A321XLR
3,816 miles / 8h 10m

7
Brasília (BSB) – Orlando (MCO)
GOL – Boeing 737 MAX 8
3,777 miles / 7h 30m

8
Dublin (DUB) – Minneapolis (MSP)
Aer Lingus – Airbus A321XLR
3,735 miles / 8h

9
Punta Cana (PUJ) – Buenos Aires (EZE)
Arajet – Boeing 737 MAX 8
3,728 miles / 7h 25m

10
Dublin (DUB) – Indianapolis (IND)
Aer Lingus – Airbus A321XLR
3,718 miles / 7h 50m

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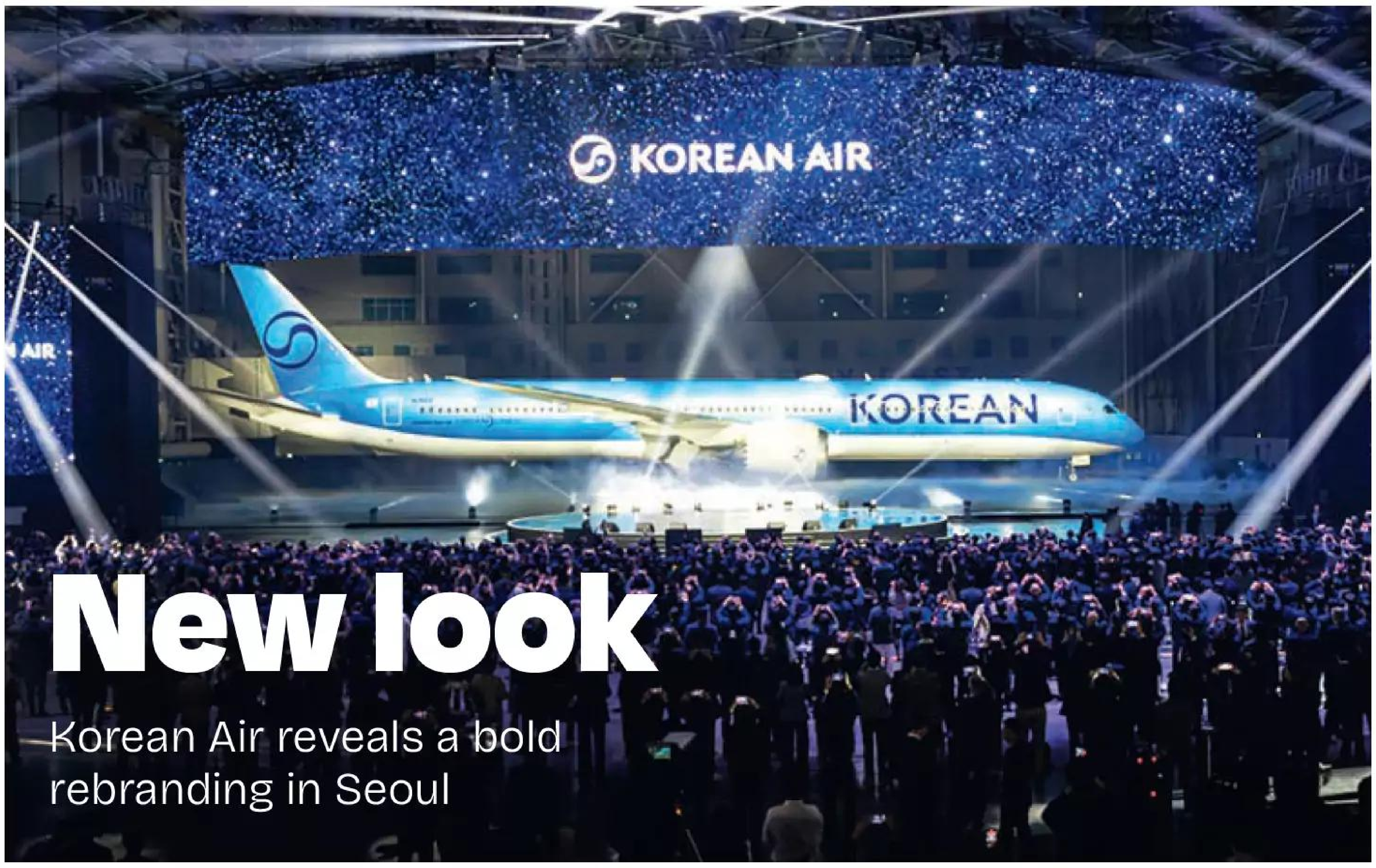


New look

Korean Air reveals a bold rebranding in Seoul

KOREAN AIR HAS unveiled its first major brand overhaul in more than four decades, showcasing a refreshed logo, modernised livery and an all-new inflight experience package. The rebranding was introduced at a grand event in Seoul, where a Boeing 787-10 debuted the airline's sleek new look.

The redesigned *taegeuk* symbol, now in a deeper shade of blue, pays homage to Korea's cultural roots, inspired by the elegant motion of the traditional *sangmo* dance. An updated logotype features refined curves reminiscent of Korean brush-strokes, merging tradition with a contemporary aesthetic. As Korean Air prepares to fully merge with its longtime competitor, Asiana Airlines, Kenneth Chang, the airline's chief marketing officer, notes how this transformation "reflects both our heritage and our vision for the future."

The revamp extends to the carrier's inflight offerings too, including the introduction of a luxurious dining experience curated by chef Seakyeong Kim of Seoul's Cesta restaurant. First and Prestige class passengers will enjoy gourmet selections such as octopus *nurungji* rice and beef brisket bibimbap. Such dishes will be served on Bernardaud china with Christofle cutlery.

Additionally, premium class passengers can enjoy Frette bedding and pyjamas, paired with Eco World's air-coil mattress and amenity kits furnished by British luxury brand Graff.

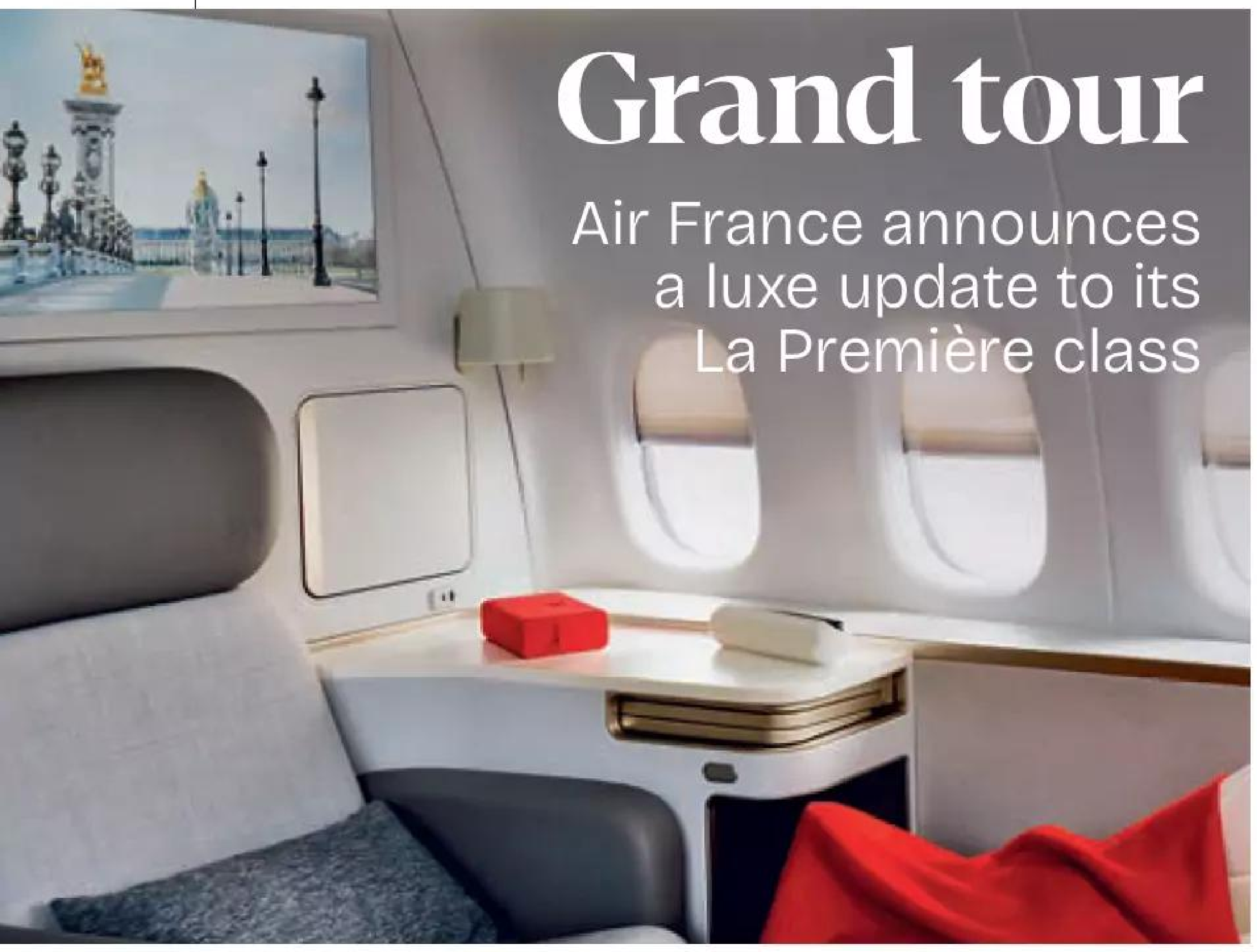
Korean Air is also investing in lounges and planning to triple its space at airports. Upcoming openings include a Million Miler Lounge and Business Lounge at Seoul Incheon in August, with additional lounges at LAX and JFK scheduled for next year.

The airline will also introduce a brand-new premium economy product alongside private first class suites. Initially debuting on retrofitted Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, the premium economy seats will also be featured on new Airbus A350s and Boeing 777-9s. Each aircraft will offer 20 to 25 premium economy seats.

"We're committed to setting a new standard in premium air travel," said Korean Air's chairman Walter Cho. "These upgrades align with our vision of providing exceptional experiences both in the air and on the ground." With its updated corporate identity and improved offerings, the carrier is set to provide a world-class service, particularly on flights to the 12 US gateways it operates.

FROM ABOVE: The new Korean Air livery on a Boeing 787-10; inflight fare

FRENCH FLAIR



Grand tour

Air France announces a luxe update to its La Première class

THE WAIT IS OVER: Air France has finally unveiled its reimagined La Première suite, and the airline's premium passengers are in for a treat. The new cabin, available on select Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, will offer an exclusive and intimate experience with only four suites per plane.

Passengers will enjoy nearly 3.5 sqm of space, with a plush leather seat that converts into a fully flat bed, a chaise longue, and spacious table ideal for dining or working.

The suites are enclosed by Air France's signature floor-to-ceiling curtains for complete privacy, while five large windows with adjustable shades provide natural light. Refined materials such as full-grain leather and soft wool complement the airline's grey and red palette.

There is also plenty of storage, with a sliding drawer for carry-on bags and a dedicated shoe compartment.

When it comes to entertainment, Air France is going all out by offering not one but two 32-inch ultra high-definition 4K screens, which can be viewed from the main seat or rear-facing chaise, as well as Denon noise-reducing headphones and Bluetooth connectivity. Complimentary Starlink wifi will also ensure seamless connectivity.

IMAGES AIR FRANCE

WORDS
ENRIQUE PERRELLA

All Nippon Airways has placed orders for 18 B787-9 Dreamliners

ANA PLACES $14 BILLION ORDER

Major investment in aircraft from Boeing, Airbus and Embraer

ANA HOLDINGS, THE parent company of All Nippon Airways, has announced a massive multi-manufacturer aircraft order worth approximately US$14 billion at list prices. The order, which includes aircraft from Boeing, Airbus and Embraer, will see at least 77 new aircraft delivered over the coming decade.

The company has reinforced its long-standing relationship with Boeing by placing firm orders for 18 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners, a model the airline was the first in the world to operate. These aircraft are expected to be delivered between 2028 and 2031, further solidifying the 787 as the backbone of ANA's international operations. Currently, the airline operates all three variants of the Dreamliner – the -8, -9 and -10 – and by 2030, ANA anticipates having about 120 Dreamliners in its fleet.

Additionally, ANA is increasing its narrowbody fleet with an order for 12 Boeing 737 MAX 8 jets, consisting of eight firm orders and four options. The total Boeing order is valued at approximately US$8.87 billion at list prices, though airlines typically negotiate significant discounts.

While Boeing secured the majority of the order, Airbus is also set to play an integral role in ANA's fleet renewal strategy. ANA Holdings has ordered 27 Airbus A321 aircraft, including 24 of the A321neo variant and three of the long-range A321XLR model. These aircraft, scheduled for delivery between 2030 and 2032, will primarily be assigned to ANA's low-cost subsidiary, Peach Aviation.

Peach, which operates an all-Airbus fleet, will receive ten of the A321neos as well as all three A321XLRs. The addition of the XLR variant suggests that the budget airline may be eyeing low-cost, long-haul operations, potentially opening up nonstop routes from Japan to destinations as far as Australia.

And in a significant first for the Japanese market, ANA Holdings has turned to Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer for its regional fleet expansion. The company has placed an order for up to 20 E190-E2 jets, including 15 firm orders and five additional options. These 100-seat aircraft, expected to be delivered between 2028 and 2032, will be deployed on domestic routes.

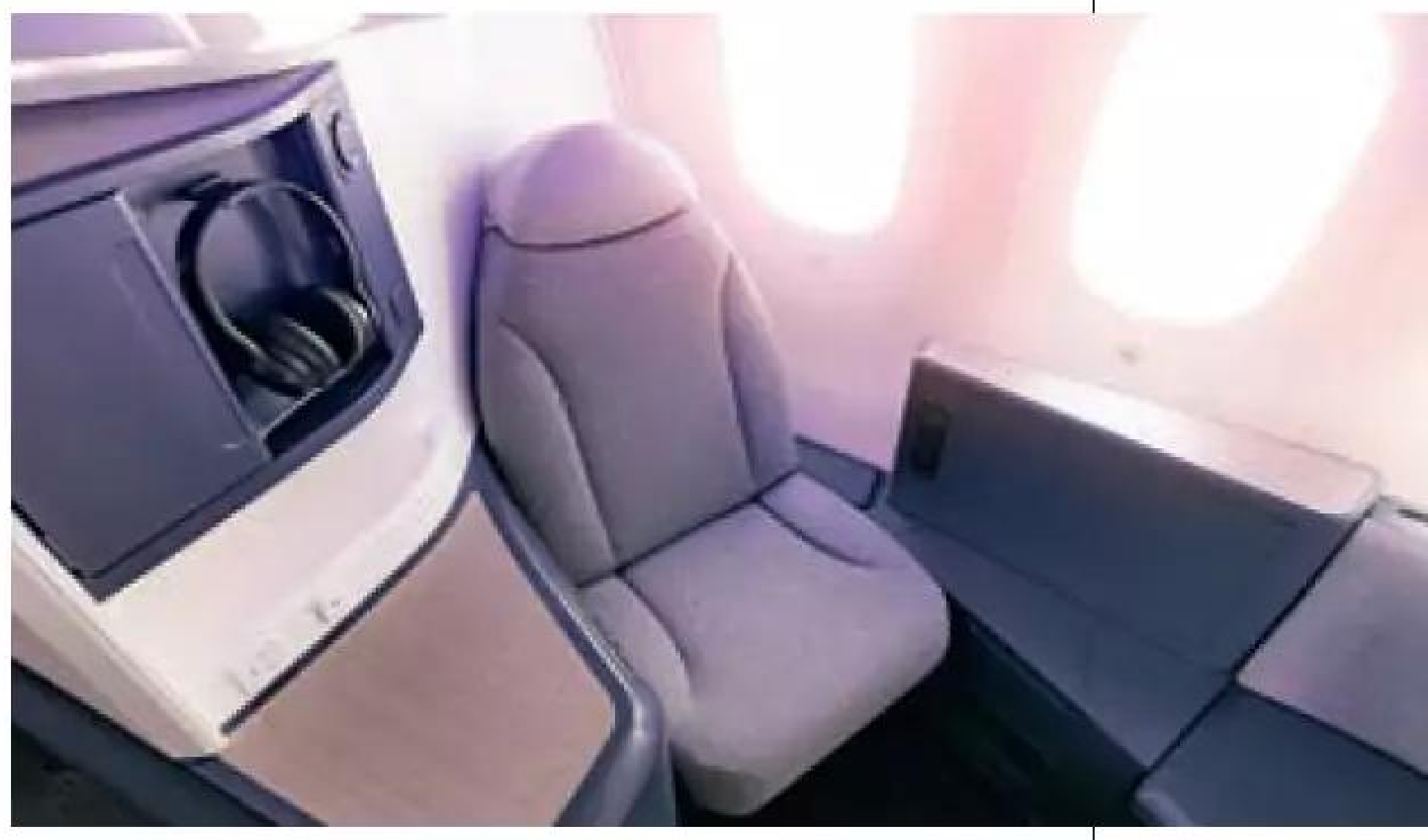
ana.co.jp

> ‘The total Boeing order is valued at approximately US$8.87 billion at list prices’

AIR NEW ZEALAND TO LAUNCH NEW BUSINESS CLASS

AIR NEW ZEALAND is unveiling its highly anticipated new business class cabin, Business Premier. This makes Air New Zealand the first airline to complete a nose-to-tail retrofit of a Boeing 787 Dreamliner. The launch was due at the time *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific* was going to press.

The airline has stated that the retrofit will include several updates designed to enhance the travel experience. These updates will feature new seating throughout the aircraft, including Business Premier Luxe seats in the new cabin. These enhanced seats will offer more space and include a privacy door for added comfort. The aircraft will also receive new carpeting, as well as curtains to provide separation between the cabins and galleys. In addition, the inflight entertainment systems will be upgraded to provide better viewing options.

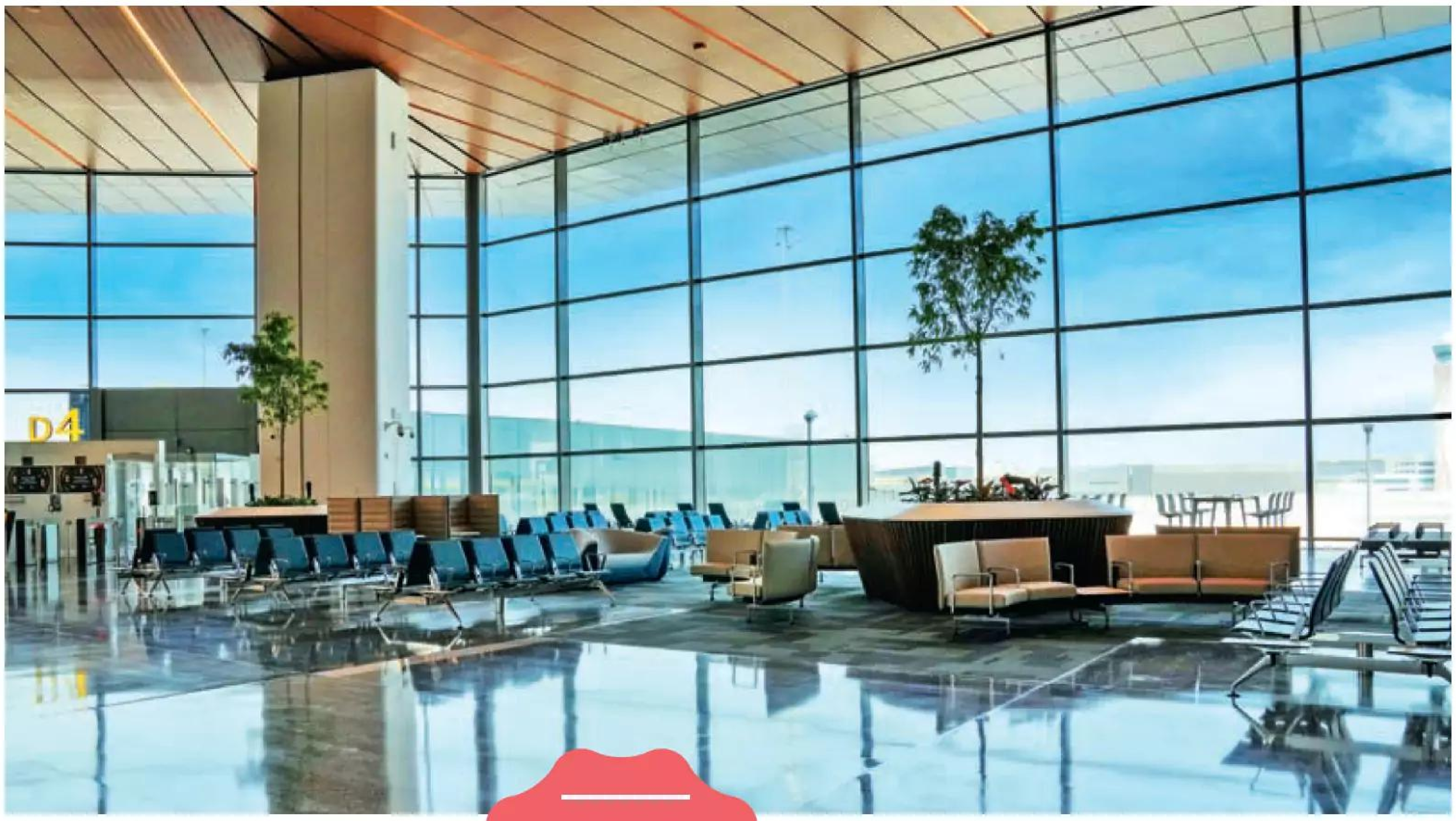


Equally groundbreaking is the upcoming introduction of the SkyNest, which will be the first ever bunk-bed-style flat-bed product for economy class passengers on long-haul flights. This innovation has been years in the making, undergoing rigorous certification processes, and is highly anticipated by both travellers and airlines worldwide.

IMAGES ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS; AIR NEW ZEALAND

WORDS
ALICE HENDERSON
JONNY CLARK

Expansion at Hamad



DOHA'S HAMAD INTERNATIONAL Airport has unveiled its state-of-the-art concourses D and E, situated either side of The Orchard (the airport's much-loved tropical indoor garden) – a simple train or buggy ride away from the check-in area, or a five-minute walk.

Often applauded for its contemporary interiors and amenities, Hamad is seen as one of the world's key hub airports; however it's dwarfed by the likes of Dubai and Istanbul airports, which can handle more than twice the traffic.

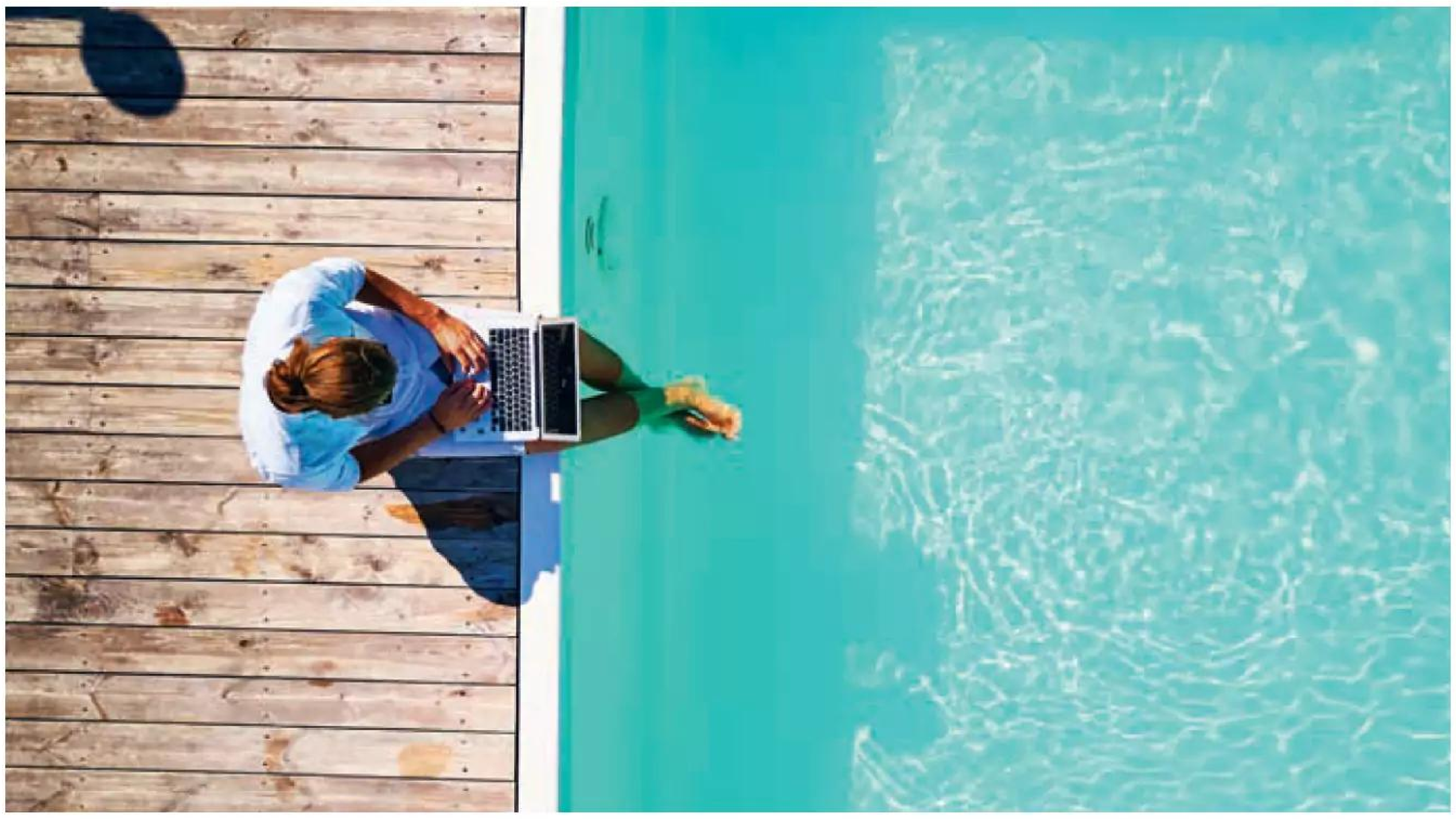
As the home of Qatar Airways, Hamad has been operating at near maximum capacity, with many passengers having to use remote stands and buses to connect between gates. While the launch of these new concourses doesn't completely eliminate this need, they go a long way in alleviating the inconvenience of bus gates.

New technology also streamlines the passenger experience, with features including self-boarding gates, smart systems such as swift document verification, and accessible features including hearing loops, barrier-free pathways, plus spacious seating areas with power sockets at every seat.

NEED TO KNOW

- The new concourses offer a total of 51,000 sqm of terminal space
- Increased airport capacity to over 65 million passengers annually
- 17 new aircraft "contact" gates: now 62 in total
- Reduction in the number of bus journeys by almost 1,000 per day
- The terminal's footprint has grown 14%
- Nine new retail and F&B venues, increasing retail space by 2,700 sqm

TRAVEL TREND WATCH



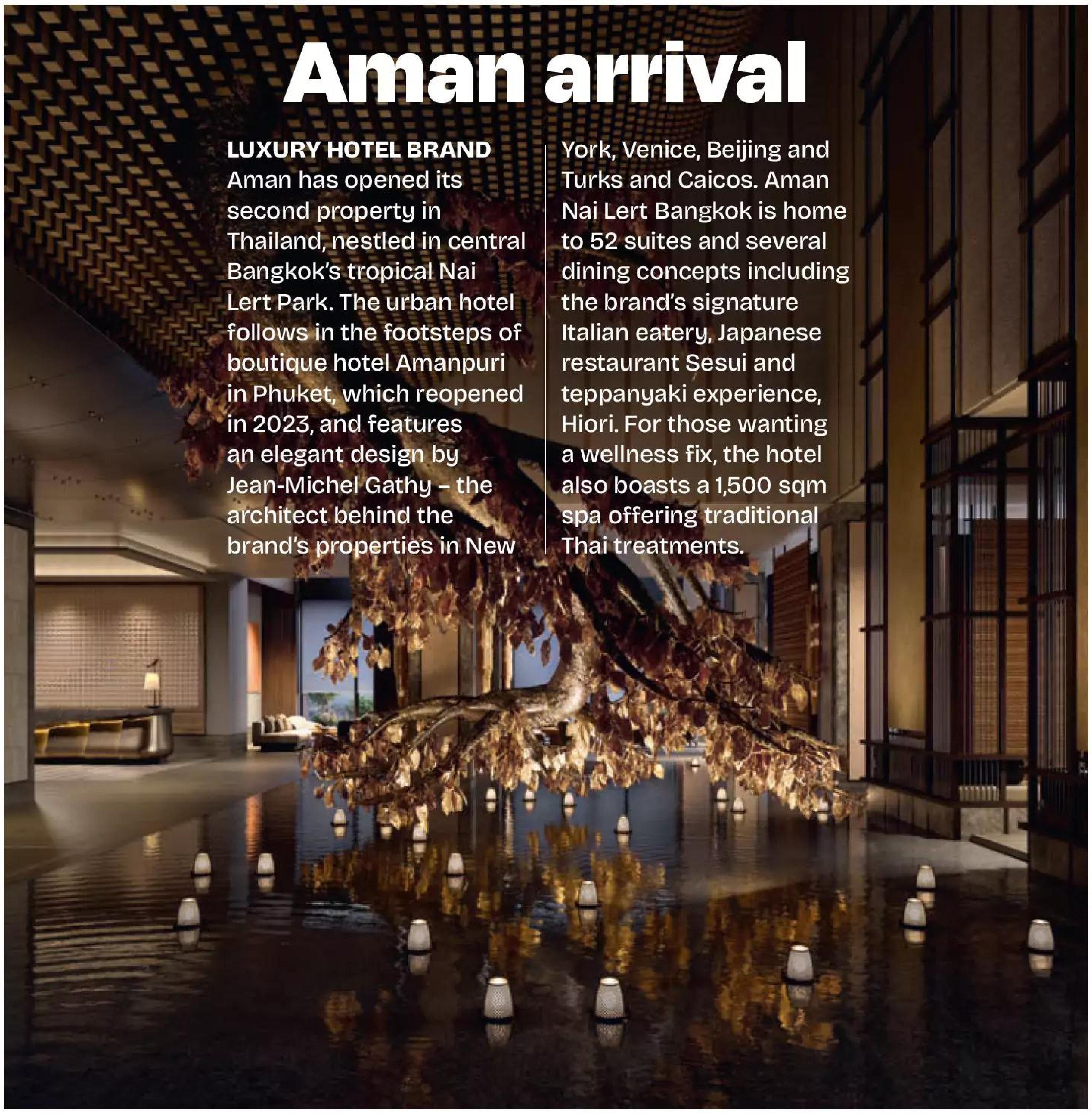
THE TERM "BLEISURE" – the practice of tacking holiday days onto business trips – has been around for a while now, but things have taken a turn. "Reverse bleisure" is the act of taking work calls or scheduling business meetings *during* holidays. Amex GBT surveyed over 1,800 business travellers, and found that the practice is becoming increasingly widespread. The company found that more than half of business travellers had done some work while away on holiday (emails from their sunloungers perhaps). The trend is most prevalent among the Gen Z and Millennial generations, who also make up a large portion of digital nomads across the globe. Only about 40 per cent of Gen Xers, meanwhile, have attempted to work during their holiday.

IMAGES ALAMY, ADOBE STOCK

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER
ALICE HENDERSON

WATERFRONT DEBUT

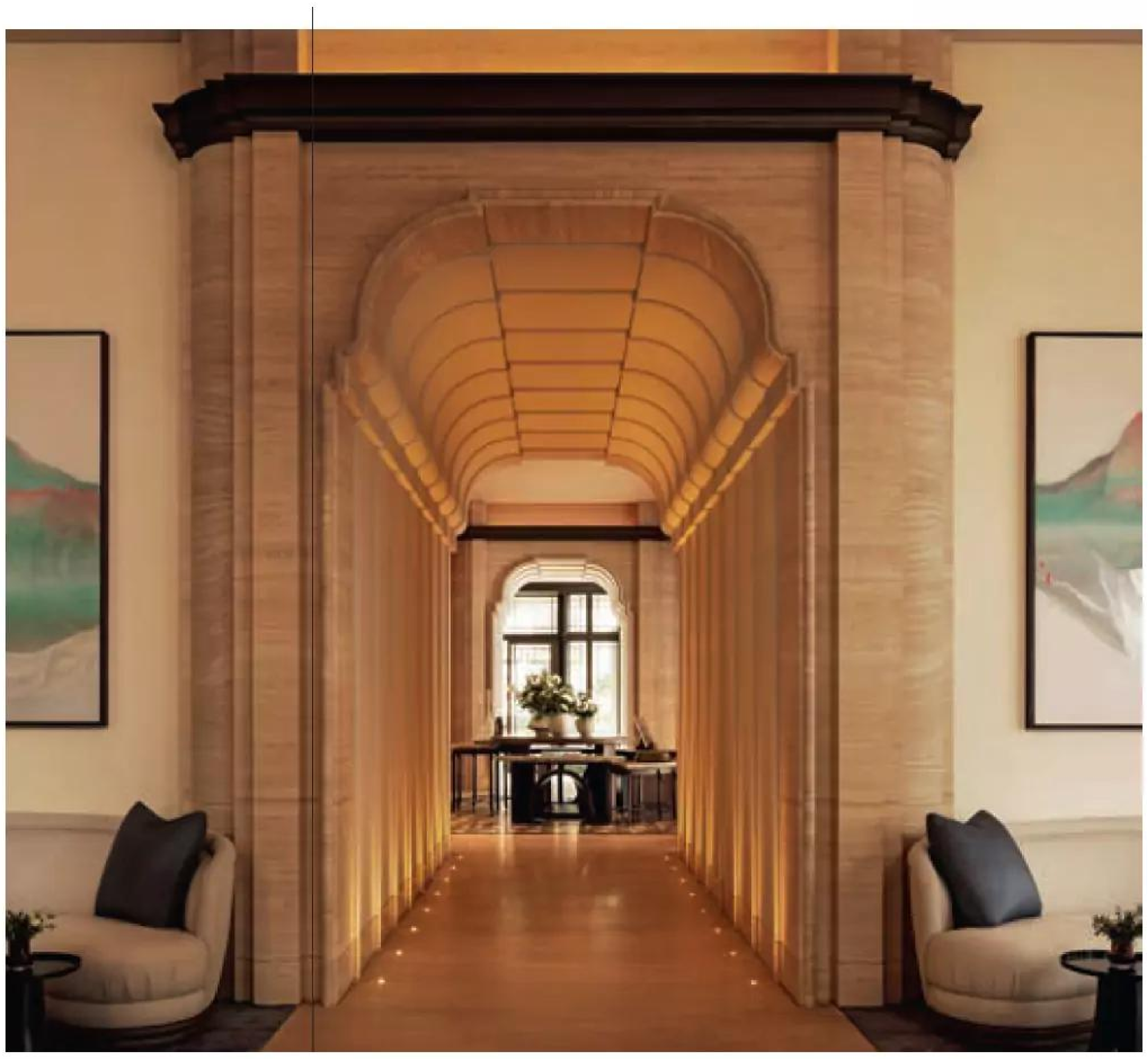
1 Hotel Melbourne is set to open this June. The waterfront property is the brand's first in Australia. At the heart of the new hotel is the heritage building Goods Shed No.5, dating to when the area was the city's main port. Located on the south-western edge of the CBD, 1 Hotel Melbourne has easy access to some of the city's top attractions. The hotel features 277 guest rooms, including 36 suites. Floor-to-ceiling windows provide plenty of natural light and frame views of the Yarra River or the city skyline.



Aman arrival

LUXURY HOTEL BRAND Aman has opened its second property in Thailand, nestled in central Bangkok's tropical Nai Lert Park. The urban hotel follows in the footsteps of boutique hotel Amanpuri in Phuket, which reopened in 2023, and features an elegant design by Jean-Michel Gathy – the architect behind the brand's properties in New York, Venice, Beijing and Turks and Caicos. Aman Nai Lert Bangkok is home to 52 suites and several dining concepts including the brand's signature Italian eatery, Japanese restaurant Sesui and teppanyaki experience, Hiori. For those wanting a wellness fix, the hotel also boasts a 1,500 sqm spa offering traditional Thai treatments.

DESIGNS ON TAIPEI



CAPELLA HOTELS AND Resorts has launched in Taiwan with a sanctuary-like hotel in the Dunhua North Road district of Taipei. The hotel boasts light-filled interiors by celebrated designer André Fu, complete with 86 rooms and suites, plus five dining venues and a spa. If you don't secure one of the rooms with a private pool terrace, head to the communal pool on the 14th floor, complete with a backdrop of the Taipei skyline – or camp out in The Living Room and hear from local historians.

IMAGES **MIKKEL VANG**

Dining delights

Airports are ramping up flavour profiles and providing more options for time-conscious travellers

A PRIMARY FACTOR for airport diners is speed – nobody wants to dash to the gate before their dessert has arrived. As such, airport "quick-service restaurants" are doing a booming trade and are a critical part of modern airport infrastructure.

Typically, they serve cost-friendly meals prepared in a systematic way and packaged so customers can take them away or enjoy quickly at the venue.

According to the *Airport Quick Service Restaurant Market Global Forecast (2025-2034)* by Global Market Insights (GMI), the market value was US$36.8 billion in 2024 and expected to grow to US$56.1 billion by 2034.

As a result, airports are seeing expanded menus and premium, celebrity-backed outlets entering the mix as customers seek quality and unique culinary experiences.

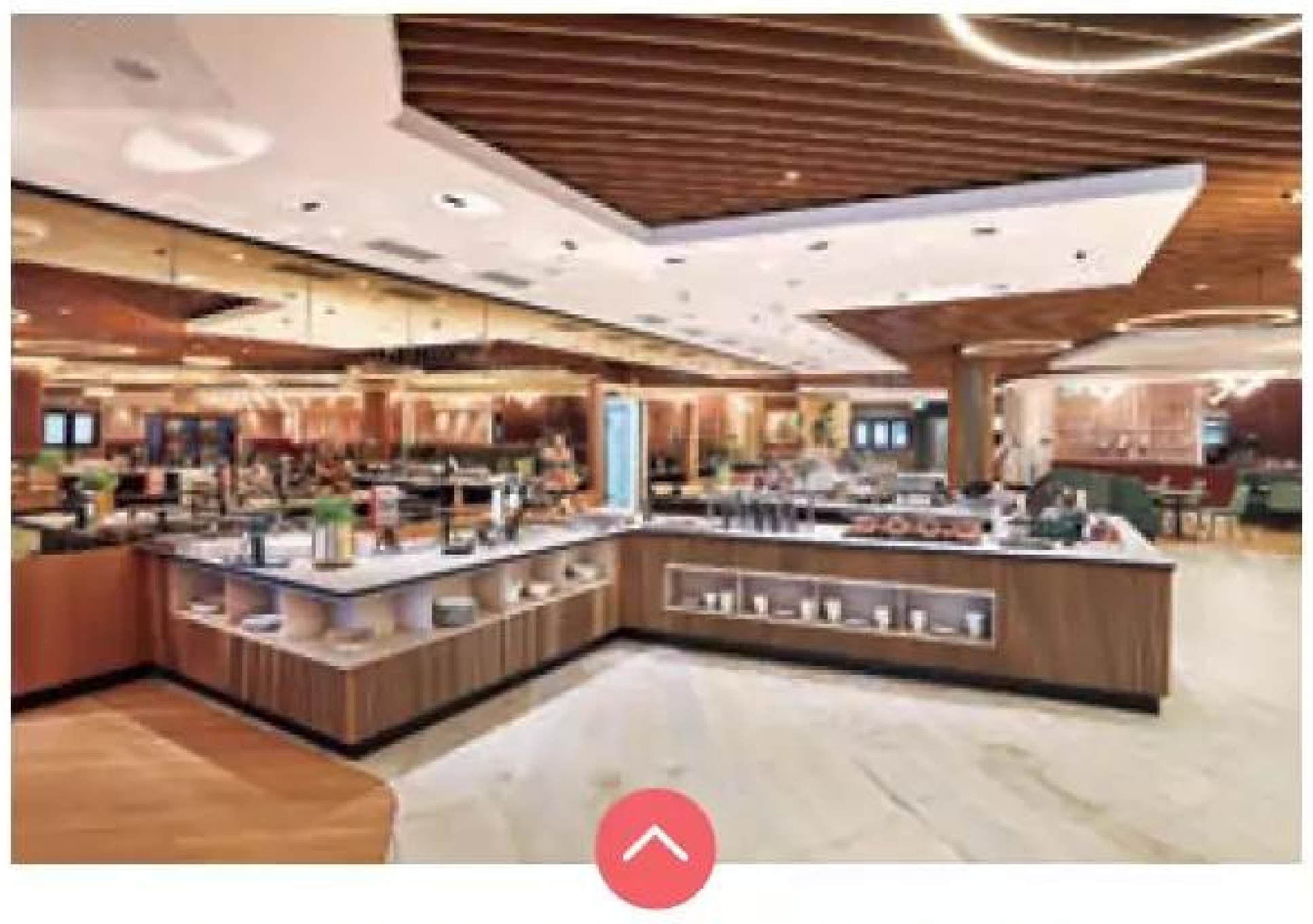
Priority Pass also meets this demand with its Airport Takeout app feature, where members can pre-order pay-as-you-go takeaway options from more than 485 cafes and restaurants in 44 leading airports across the UK and US.

Renowned chefs and gourmet brands also help to capture the attention of premium travellers. Gordon Ramsay's Plane Food, for instance, launched at Heathrow almost 20 years ago, and the renowned chef is now partnering with Travel Food Services to launch six dining outlets at Indian airports by 2027, while famed Turkish chef Nusret Gökçe (aka Saltbae) opened Saltbae Burger in 2023, with plans to expand to ten airports.

Plant-based options are also on the rise, catering to health-conscious customers, and more planet-friendly practices. According to the 2025 GMI report, 57 per cent of airport diners consider sustainability when choosing where to eat, while restaurants are investing more in eco-friendly back-of-house operations, from waste management to biodegradable packaging.

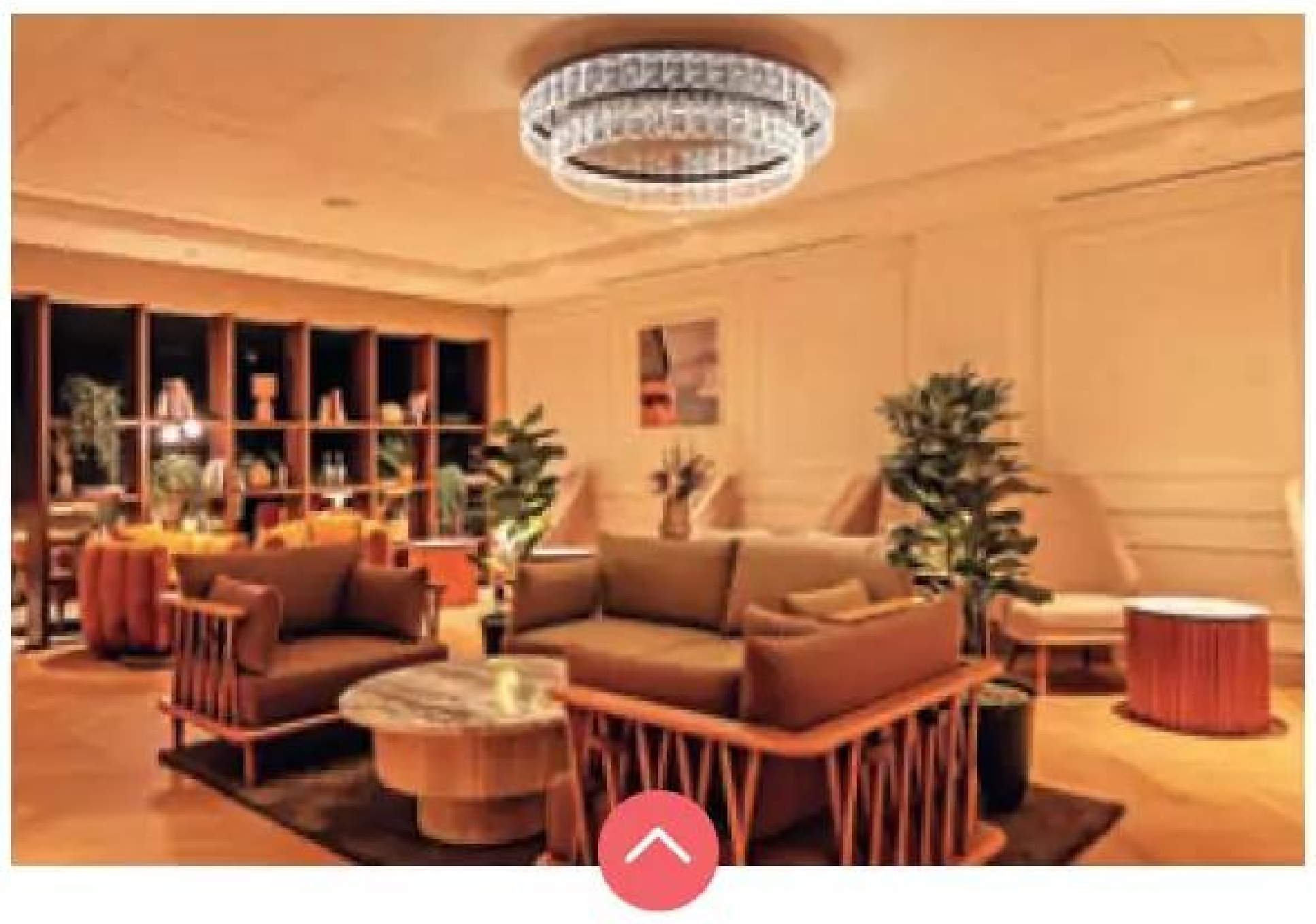
On the technological side, self-service kiosks are being introduced at airports to speed things up by reducing wait times, while also allowing customers to order from multiple brands. Robots are also increasingly being deployed, both to help with food prep in the kitchens and the delivery of dishes to customers.

> 'Saltbae Burger opened in Istanbul Grand Airport in 2023, with plans to expand to ten international airports'



VIENNA LOUNGE, TERMINAL 1, VIENNA AIRPORT, AUSTRIA

Find cold cuts of meat and cheese, a salad bar, and a wide range of traditional desserts in the Viennese cafe, including the classic apple strudel. You'll also be able to enjoy Austrian beers and wines, including an Austrian sparkling wine.

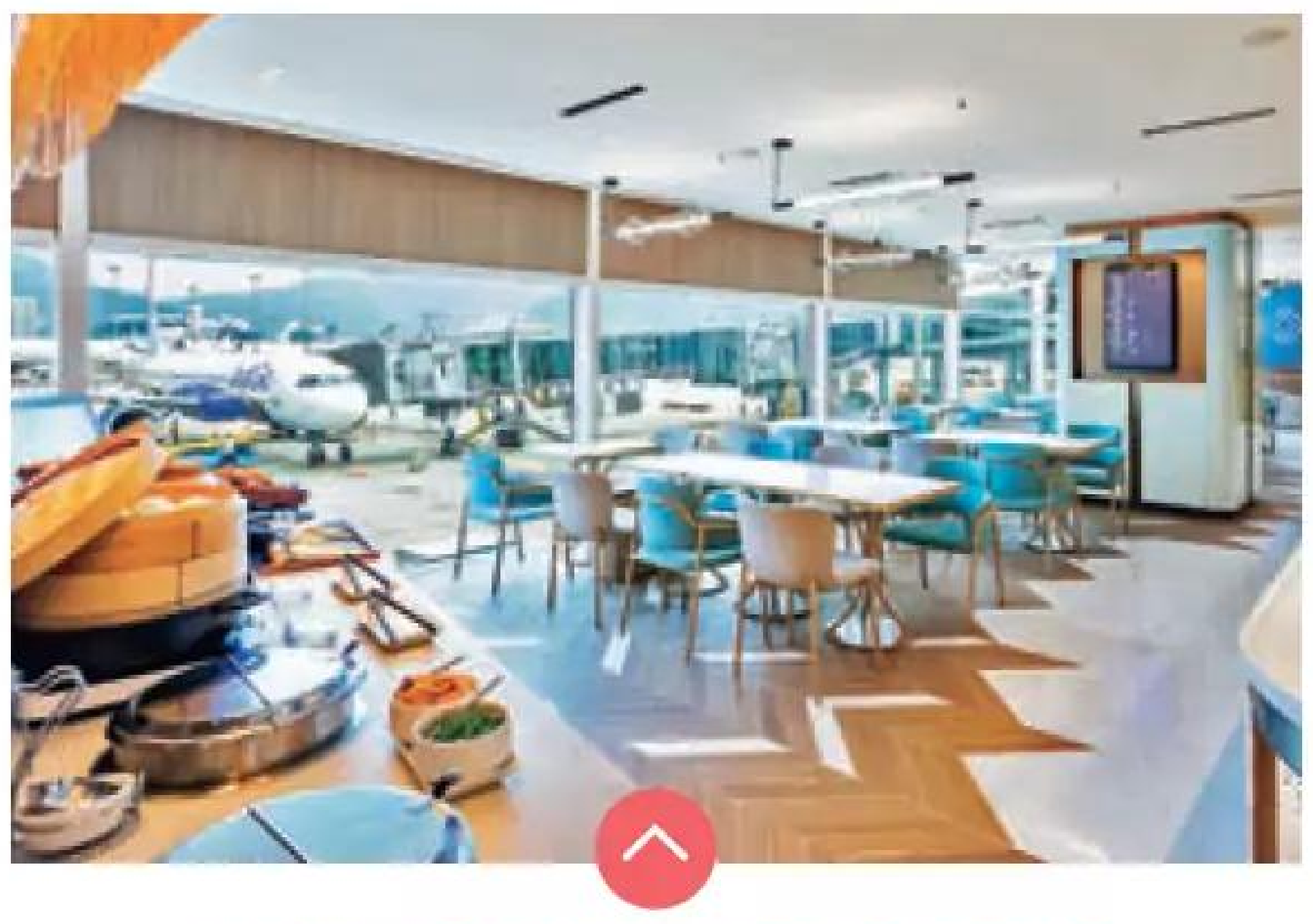


NO1 LOUNGE, LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT TERMINAL 2

Seasonal food and premium British produce reigns supreme at the new lounge in The Queen's Terminal. Passengers will find hot and cold dishes, from pastries to salads, plus Fever Tree Tonics for a classic British G&T.

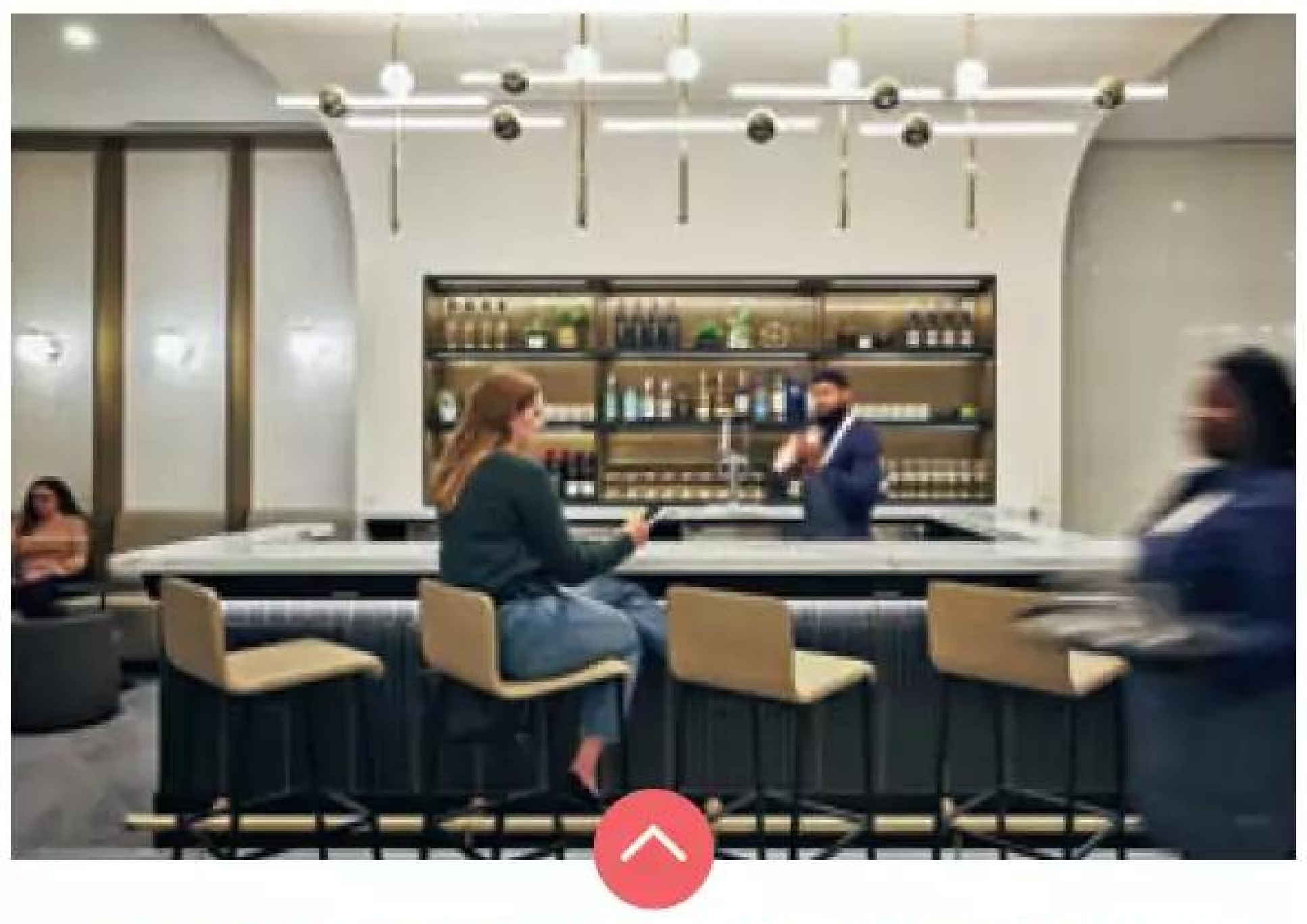
LOCAL FLAVOUR

Food is an important part of travel, and airport lounges are starting to curate F&B offerings that give a sense of place



KYRA LOUNGE, HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Tuck into comforting classic Chinese congee and Cantonese dim sum, or iconic Hong Kong street food like fish siu mai and traditional curried fish balls. Pair your meal with the 'Fragrant Harbour' cocktail, inspired by Hong Kong's trading port history.



THE CLUB MDW, CHICAGO MIDWAY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The Club MDW celebrates local food and drink with a menu that reflects Chicago's vibrant dining scene alongside craft beers from Revolutionary Brewing and Two Brothers Brewing, plus spirits from the Chicago-based KOVAL Distillery.

BITE-SIZED DINING

64%

of travellers prioritise dining as part of the airport experience

61%

are interested in paying for premium food and beverage options

58%

are interested in paying extra for a full table dining service

2%

of travellers never eat or drink at the airport

Source: Airport Dimensions Airport Experience Research 2024

WHAT TO EAT AND DRINK

PRE-FLIGHT NUTRITION TIPS FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP

Herbal tea
A soothing camomile or fresh peppermint tea will help you relax for your flight and avoid dehydration.

Complex carbs
Whole grains, brown rice and quinoa all offer slow-burning energy release without spiking your blood sugar – ideal for long periods of sitting.

Lean protein
Whether you go for turkey or tofu, light proteins will support energy levels and muscle function during your flight.

Fruits
Boost your immunity with Vitamin C-packed oranges, and enjoy a potassium-rich banana to regulate blood pressure and ward off muscle cramps.

Healthy fats
Nuts, seeds and avocados are great at helping you stay full and easing digestion.

IMAGES ADOBE STOCK, GETTY IMAGES

WORDS
LAUREN SMITH

ON THE MENU

Masterchef at work for Singapore Airlines

PACIFIC FLAIR Monica Galetti introduces a flavour of the South Seas to SIA

Monica Galetti brings new dishes to SIA's premium cabins this summer

TV CELEBRITY CHEF Monica Galetti has crafted new spring and summer menus for Singapore Airlines' premium cabins, with dishes combining her French culinary training and South Pacific heritage, as well as fresh and seasonal British produce.

The *Masterchef* judge first partnered with the Singaporean flag carrier last year and has already curated autumn, winter and spring menus for its flights from the UK. The successful collaboration will continue with a new summer menu for the airline's suites and its first and business class cabins.

The summer menu launches in premium cabins on SIA flights departing London Heathrow, London Gatwick and Manchester from June 1, and will run to August 31.

Both first class and business class menus begin with a vibrant heritage tomato salad with bresaola and mint, dressed with a verjus and black garlic emulsion.

In first class and the suites, the salad is followed by a chilled almond soup topped with fresh almonds and grapes, one of Galetti's favourite dishes.

The main is succulent slow-cooked Iberico pork, served with grilled leeks, potato purée, shallots and edible nasturtium flowers. Dessert is a strawberry *fraisier* cake with refreshing lime sherbet.

For business class passengers, the main is charred lamb with basil and courgette, sweetcorn and pea salsa, with a raspberry pistachio tartlet to finish.

Seasonal ingredients

"For my spring and summer collection for Singapore Airlines, I wanted to capture the essence of the seasons using high-quality ingredients that are in natural abundance," says Galetti. "As a frequent flyer with Singapore Airlines, I was inspired to create a refined menu that offers comfort and indulgence at 35,000ft to complement its world-class service".

She takes inspiration from her Samoan heritage, bringing the flavours of the Pacific islands to her dishes. However, the restaurateur says she faced a "learning curve to adjust the cooking to suit the cabin", outlining the challenge of creating dishes that can be plated by cabin crew in the limited space of the galley and heated to the right temperature using onboard ovens.

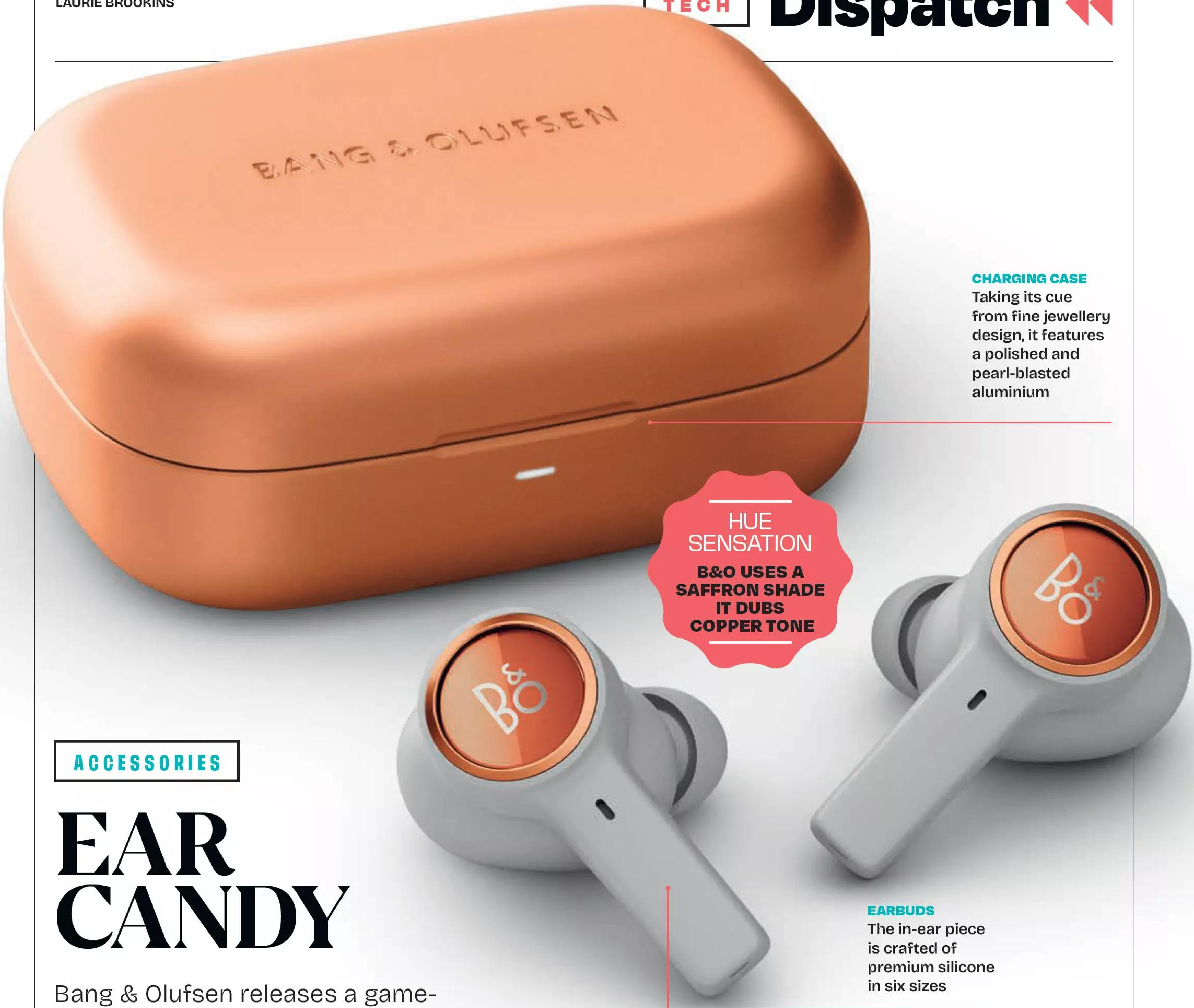
She notes that flight attendants, with many other duties on board, can perform just a handful of steps when preparing each menu. For the first class cabins and the suites, they usually perform five or six steps per plate, while for business class meals, they typically perform just two to three.

"Do I need to double up – should I heat the meat with the sauce so it doesn't dry out? You try to simplify the processes without losing the heart of what you want the dish to look and taste like," she says.

> 'I faced a learning curve to adjust the cooking to suit the cabin'

IMAGES © NICK MORRISH, SINGAPORE AIRLINES

WORDS
LAURIE BROOKINS



CHARGING CASE
Taking its cue from fine jewellery design, it features a polished and pearl-blasted aluminium

HUE SENSATION
B&O USES A SAFFRON SHADE IT DUBS COPPER TONE

EARBUDS
The in-ear piece is crafted of premium silicone in six sizes

ACCESSORIES

EAR CANDY

Bang & Olufsen releases a game-changing audio accessory

ASK ANY AUDIOPHILE what they love about their favourite pair of headphones or earbuds, and chances are they'll mention both exceptional sound quality and the unique look of their preferred choice. Denmark-based Bang & Olufsen, which is celebrating its centennial this year, historically has blended high-end audio technology with sleek design that takes its cue from Scandinavian style. That's certainly true of Beoplay Eleven, the brand's latest generation of wireless earbuds.

Designed to include a 9.2mm driver in each earbud, Beoplay Eleven starts from a position of powerful, clear sound. But Bang & Olufsen touts the news that Beoplay Eleven offers the brand's best noise-cancellation technology in an earbud to date. That idea should sound appealing to anyone who depends on this essential feature on an aircraft, amid the cacophony of a convention hall or while making a call on a city pavement. Using the Beoplay Eleven for the latter also has been improved thanks to the addition of a microphone inlet that has been subtly enlarged and a padded fine mesh that filters out wind noise, both to deliver better sound and clarity.

As with most Bang & Olufsen audio products, the look of these earbuds shares equal attention with their sound quality. Other features include multipoint Bluetooth, a battery life of six hours with noise cancellation or eight hours without, and a transparency mode that allows the user to easily toggle noise cancellation on and off with just a tap.

$499; bang-olufsen.com

IMAGES **BANG & OLUFSEN**

→

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

BEST BUY

Making waves

CUTTING-EDGE COMPANY Groundtruth champions sustainable change in the fashion world, transforming plastic waste and CO_2 emissions into ready-to-wear textiles. The innovative brand has teamed up with global diving organisation PADI to launch a collection of waterproof bags – fittingly taking the Latin name for "wave." The turquoise-toned Unda range is produced from plastic waste strewn across our oceans – from ghost fishing nets to post-consumer nylon and plastic bottles – and combined with the company's patent-pending captured-CO_2-emissions hardware. Products range from a 25-litre roll-top backpack to a cross-body pouch and tote bag, and are available to purchase at groundtruth.global. The brand was founded by sister trio Georgia, Nina and Sophia Scott, and builds on their investigative documentary filmmaking experience across Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

GROUNDTRUTH®
PADI®

DID YOU KNOW? Ghost fishing nets contribute to over **50%** of all plastic waste in the oceans

IN GOOD SPIRITS

PRODUCED IN THE Hepple Hills of the spectacular Northumberland National Park in the UK, Hepple Gin is marking its tenth anniversary with a new bottle made from locally sourced, recycled materials. The botanical-based gin is packaged in glassware made from 52 per cent recycled material, complete with a recycled and lightweight stopper sourced from FSC-certified forests, and a label made from 100 per cent cotton. The gin is available from several Asia-based online retailers.

ECO EXPANSION

BEYOND GREEN HAS surpassed the 50-member milestone, expanding its portfolio of sustainable hotels, resorts and lodges across 22 countries. New recruits include eight &Beyond lodges in South Africa. To make the cut, properties must engage in eco-friendly practices that go beyond the basics, protect the area's natural and cultural heritage, and enhance social well-being in local communities. CEO Lindsey Ueberroth comments, "Each property in our portfolio offers travellers the assurance that their choices support meaningful change, all while providing exceptional service and unforgettable experiences." Owned by Preferred Travel Group, Beyond Green participates in the I Prefer Hotel Rewards loyalty programme.

HOW DOES IT WORK? Properties undergo a rigorous vetting process based on more than 50 sustainability indicators that align with global sustainable tourism standards and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

IMAGES **JODI HINDS; SAFIA SHAKARCHI; COURTESY OF BEYOND GREEN**

All access

Resorts around the world are proving their green bona fides with behind-the-scenes eco-tours

HOTELS ONCE got kudos for stocking guest rooms with recycling bins and paraben-free toiletries. But as interest in sustainability increases, travellers are savvy to sham claims about eco-friendliness. A few brands are putting their money where their mouth is, by inviting guests behind the scenes to tour compost piles, organic gardens, desalination plants and employee-only spaces.

Jeff Smith, vice president of sustainability at Six Senses, says sustainability tours are standard at its properties: "We want to be as transparent as possible and offer opportunities to participate."

At Six Senses Vana in India, guests can tour The Village, where a wastewater treatment plant hums continuously and employees fill hundreds of glass bottles with filtered water from a nearby river. The water-bottling plant, meanwhile, has eliminated over 100,000 single-use plastic bottles annually since 2014.

At Cayuga Collection, luxury eco-resorts in Costa Rica, Panama and Nicaragua, president and co-founder Hans Pfister says tours turn first-time visitors into brand champions. "When guests visit the back of house, they get to meet staff members – like laundry personnel, chefs, maintenance workers and gardeners – whom they typically wouldn't see. This engagement makes those employees proud and eager to showcase their contributions." And the cherry on top for management? Back-of-house tours leave no choice but to keep each space clean and organised, boosting efficiency.

At CGH Earth Experience Hotels in southern India, daily tours reveal eco features hiding in plain sight, such as a paper-recycling plant camouflaged within the vegetable garden. Then there's Soneva resorts, whose Waste-to-Wealth centres show how glass waste is transformed into art for its galleries, while food scraps feed compost that fertilises the restaurant's gardens.

The carbon-neutral family-owned Hotel Belmar in Costa Rica, meanwhile, checks all the boxes on any eco-friendliness bingo card: an organic farm to supply the restaurant, a biodigester to transform organic waste into clean gas energy, and a laundry solarium to harness the sun for drying linen. Managing director Pedro Belmar says tasting the on-site crafted beer while learning how the brewery repurposes waste is a guest favourite.

Tour at Senda Monteverde Hotel, Costa Rica **INSET:** Mantled howler monkey at Jicaro Island Ecolodge, Nicaragua

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Harbour Plaza North Point – MTR Quarry Bay Station

Kowloon Harbourfront Hotel – MTR Hung Hom Station

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Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees – MTR Sung Wong Toi Station

Harbour Grand Kowloon – MTR Whampoa Station

The Kowloon Hotel – MTR Tsim Sha Tsui Station

Harbour Plaza Resort City – MTR Tin Shui Wai Station

Rambler Garden Hotel – MTR Tsing Yi Station

Rambler Oasis Hotel – MTR Tsing Yi Station

SHANGHAI

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Explore

Eat, drink, shop, relax

EXTRA DAY

WORDS
RICHARD LORD

Hong Kong's Western District

Formerly a backwater, the area to the west of Central district has been transformed by new infrastructure and is well worth a visit

ON TRACK
In 2014, a three-station addition to the MTR, Hong Kong's hyper-efficient metro system, sparked the transformation of Hong Kong's Western District from an undistinguished hinterland and dormitory suburb to a buzzy area filled with culture and nightlife that has become a destination in its own right. Also known as Sai Wan, the area was previously accessible solely via busy roads. It extends from Central-adjacent Sheung Wan in the east, to Kennedy Town in the west, where the MTR line now ends.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES

VIBRANT BAR SCENE

Western has always had excellent places to eat – you'd have to look long and hard to find a Hong Kong district that doesn't – mostly of the hole-in-the-wall, cheap-and-cheerful variety. Recent gentrification, however, has added a diverse selection of destination watering holes into the mix. From Sheung Wan's well-established scene to newer hubs further west, there are almost limitless choices, many of them highly distinctive. Sai Ying Pun's Ping Pong 129 Gintonería, for example, a former table tennis centre, offers an extremely extensive selection of gins amid industrial chic decor and regular cutting-edge contemporary art exhibitions; the same district's West Garden Lane combines carefully crafted cocktails with a vast collection of vinyl.

HERITAGE BUILDINGS

After all that refuelling (or possibly, for tactical reasons, before it), you're going to want to raise the tone a notch with a dose of culture. Fortunately, Western delivers here too: it was one of the earliest developed areas during the city's colonial period, and the legacy is a relatively rich – by always-being-rebuilt Hong Kong standards – collection of historic buildings. Exhibit A here is the University of Hong Kong – easily reachable via its own MTR station – with its 13 listed buildings, led by the Edwardian baroque Main Building, dating back to 1912 (there's also a free museum). Also worth checking out are the 1906 red-brick Western Market, now complete with restaurants and boutiques; the strikingly incongruous Gothic revival Kau Yan Church in Sai Ying Pun; the expansively classical, late Victorian Sai Ying Pun Community Complex, formerly a mental hospital; and Kennedy Town's atmospheric, Chinese banyan-draped Lo Pan Temple, the only one in the city dedicated to the patron deity of builders and carpenters.

> ‘Perhaps the best spot for a view is the Sai Wan Swimming Shed’

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Ping Pong 129 Gintonería; Lo Pan Temple; Western Market

ART LANE

If you prefer your culture a little more street, Sai Ying Pun's Art Lane is precisely that: an insanely photogenic collision of extraordinarily high-quality murals plastered all over a collection of buildings and old alleyways. Its countercultural credentials are slightly undercut by it being a project of a property developer – by no means an unusual state of affairs in Hong Kong.

THE WATERFRONT

Western's location, added to the fact that – like most built-up areas of Hong Kong, it's right by the sea – makes it the perfect place to catch a spectacular sunset. And the city serves up many. A waterfront promenade now runs all the way from Central to Kennedy Town; until its pandemic-induced 2021 closure, the snappily named Western District Public Cargo Working Area, aka Instagram Pier, jutting out into the harbour with no railings, was the favoured spot of the snap-happy. But perhaps the best spot for a view – and, if you're feeling particularly brave, a dip – is Sai Wan Swimming Shed, a highly picturesque, rustic pier-with-steps that juts out dramatically into the open sea.

IMAGES ART EXHIBITION 'HK/JAPAN' FEATURING PHOTOGRAPHY FROM MICHAEL WOLF 'TOKYO COMPRESSION', 2025; PHOTO: STUDIO 8; ADOBE STOCK

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Four square

We bring you a genuine master chef with over four decades at the same hotel, plus four hot tables in four Asian cities

THE CHEF

Lau Yiu Fai of Lai Ching Heen, Hong Kong

Holding the culinary accolade of two Michelin stars, Lai Ching Heen at Regent Hong Kong is a Cantonese restaurant with few equals. That recognition is due, in great part, to executive chef Lau Yiu Fai and his astonishing run of 45 years mastering fire and flavour at the same hotel. A true master of his craft, his approach has always been to take the finest ingredients and let them shine through traditional Cantonese techniques. One key is *wok hei*, meaning "breath of the wok", which comes only after years of mastery of wok cooking to impart smoke and char into ingredients.

The 120-seat restaurant features beautiful Chinese antiques including exquisite jade panelling and a collection of rare Yixing teapots, while the space has stunning views of Victoria Harbour. But most of all, it's Lau's plates which steal the show. Tasting menus include stellar renditions of the freshest seafood, so beloved in Hong Kong, such as braised fish maw with crispy sea cucumber in oyster jus, or lobster served chilled, braised and fried on the same plate. But meats including baby pigeon and Kagoshima Wagyu also get taken to new heights by his flawless execution, honed over decades.

FROM TOP: Lai Ching Heen's lobby; sea cucumber stuffed with pork and duck; chef Lau

THE TABLES

Four new restaurants add to Asia's culinary tapestry in style

Pink Pearl, Phu Quoc, Vietnam

Down on the increasingly popular Vietnamese island of Phu Quoc, French chef Olivier Elzer has taken his multiple Michelin-starred experience to open Pink Pearl, an ocean-front restaurant at JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay

WORDS
CHRIS DWYER

THE AWARD

Stars over Seoul

HISTORY WAS RECENTLY made in the South Korean capital as Mingles became the first restaurant in the country to be awarded three Michelin stars. Chef Kang Mingoo crafts dishes of understated beauty to reflect Mingles' minimalist interiors, while Korean artisans are celebrated in both tableware and decor. From the innovative menu, fish *mandu* – a type of dumpling – are stellar, while his sticky rice risotto with king crab lives long in the memory. Ingredients such as sea cucumber and acorn noodles reflect his embrace of the unusual, contributing to a singular dining experience.

Resort and Spa. Elzer worked for chef luminaries including Pierre Gagnaire and Joël Robuchon and today his menus celebrate Mediterranean ingredients with local touches. Expect locally caught bonito with endive and comté cheese, or a take on the Provençal favourite *bohémienne* which melds aubergine, tomato and parmesan to delicious effect.

Bon Broth, Singapore
Another celebrated chef has opened in the Lion City. André Chiang, with multiple Michelin-starred restaurants to his name, has created an elevated take on hot pot in the form of Bon Broth. A broth sommelier – yes, really – introduces the eight flavours, including laksa, sauerkraut or the signature lip-numbing Sichuan green pepper. Then dip and dunk away your choice of meat, seafood or vegetables.

Sartoria by Paulo Airaudo, Bangkok
Few locations in the Thai capital boast the culinary firepower of the 56th floor at The Empire, a luxury high-rise where new spot Sartoria sits alongside acclaimed restaurants K by Vicky Cheng and Le Du. Sartoria means "tailoring" in Italian and the food from chef Paulo Airaudo celebrates Florence along with Thai and Japanese touches and produce. Think duck cappelletti, risotto with carabinero prawns, or an exquisite-sounding *kinmedai* snapper fish with pearl onion and a Champagne sauce.

Sazón, Bali
Another white-hot dining spot comes in Bali, where Sazón Tapas Bar & Grill has quickly become a must-visit. Located at the swish Regent Bali Canggu, Spanish dishes from acclaimed Aussie chef Andrew Walsh include delicate but delicious tapas and two show-stoppers of squid ink paella and dry-aged Txuleta beef, cooked to tender perfection on a *parrilla*, a typical Spanish grill.

MEAT FEAST Sazón's dry-aged Txuleta beef

Shake it up

Four spots for seriously creative cocktails illustrate the thrilling nature of Asia's bar scene

Night Hawk, Singapore
Inspired by a 1942 Edward Hopper painting of the same name, the 25-seat Night Hawk in Tanjong Pagar is one of Singapore's most acclaimed bars. Once you manage to get a seat, kick off with a Kick Artist Fix, where rye, maple, rum, fortified wine and more combine in an homage to a classic Manhattan.

Ito, Manila
Although a cocktail tasting menu sounds like a one-way ticket to Hangover Ville, Ito in Manila's swanky Makati district, shows just how nuanced drinks can be. Its Turon melds a potent spirit called *lambanog*, infused with banana, but thickens it with egg white and cinnamon for a smooth-as-silk sipper.

Dry Wave Cocktail Studio, Bangkok
Dry Wave Cocktail Studio from bar supremo Supawit "Palm" Muttaratana regularly changes its cocktail menus. One recent iteration riffs on an Apple Gimlet: Newton's Law features whisky, tonka bean, almond, lavender and oregano to unusual but delicious effect.

The Aubrey, Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong
A funked-up Japanese *izakaya* (cafe-bar), The Aubrey was named number ten among Asia's 50 Best Bars. Bar manager Stefano Bussi's latest menu features loquat fruit, and it's in the Biwano Yume where it features alongside The Botanist gin, Cointreau, citrus and shiso, for fragrant feels.

WORDS
LAUREL IVES

Mirror, mirror on the wall…

Smart Mirrors led the charge at this year's CES, joining an array of AI tech innovations

SMART MIRRORS go beyond providing a simple reflection. Using AI, sensors and digital displays they are able to offer personal health and beauty insights.

The futuristic Withings Omnia mirror and scales caused a stir at the Vegas trade show. Users step on the scale and 360-degree body scanners measure their weight and both metabolic and heart health, while an AI voice assistant offers friendly feedback. Omnia can also pull medical data collected from other trackers like your smartwatch or blood pressure monitor to provide recommendations.

> ‘Given the interest at the trade fair, expect to see smart mirrors on the market soon’

The Omnia mirror is only at the concept stage (and too large for a conventional bathroom) but Withings is working on a smaller consumer version.

Samsung also showcased its Micro LED Beauty Mirror. The camera at the top scans your face in roughly 30 seconds and analyses skin to assess four areas – pores, wrinkles, melanin (tone) and redness. This is combined with data from 20,000 clinical image-based skin diagnoses to deliver an AI Skin Report. Recommendations for skincare products are then displayed on the mirror screen. The Micro LED Beauty Mirror is also in the concept stage.

Sleep analysis
WITHINGS

CHECK YOURSELF OUT Soon you'll be able to retrieve information about your health and skincare with Withings' Omnia mirror and scales

Plasma therapy in the Big Apple

AMAN HOTELS IS known for offering cutting-edge treatments, and its New York hotel has just launched Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy in partnership with the Manhattan-based aesthetic centre, bodySCULPT, known for specialising in minimally invasive medical aesthetics.

PRP works by using the healing properties of your blood to rejuvenate your skin – hence its nickname as the "vampire" facial when it was first popularised by celebrities like Kim Kardashian.

As well as for facials, PRP can also be used on the head, neck and hands. A small amount of the individual's blood is taken and then spun in a centrifuge to extract the platelet-rich plasma, a powerful substance rich in growth factors that promote cell repair, stimulate collagen, reduce acne scarring and fine lines, while also improving hyperpigmentation and promoting hair growth. The platelet-rich plasma is then injected or applied to areas of concern. And if you're not convinced, improvements can reportedly be seen after just one treatment.

DID YOU KNOW? **Hilton hotels has partnered with Calm, a leading app for sleep, meditation classes and relaxing soundscapes. Launched in April, guests can access the app for free from their in-room TV.**

TAKE THE COLD PLUNGE

THOSE OF US who don't mind swimming in cold seas know that the biggest faff is the speedy changing required to warm up afterwards. Enter the Wydling boiler suit, invented by cold water swimmers, Daniela Bohling and Millie Dornan (wife of actor Jamie Dornan).

The suit is light and flexible, so you can wear it over your swimmers en route to the shore, and its micro fleece lining means its cosy enough to pull on after a chilly dip.

Plus, it's surprisingly flattering to wear and a great addition to your cold-swimming wardrobe.

The Wylding suit costs £160 (US$205) and comes in three colours: Moss Green, Midnight Black and Marine Blue. Each year, the brand offers a guest colour – last year it was on-trend Burgundy combined with an ice-blue fleece, while this summer sees the launch of Cocoa with a sky-blue lining.

IMAGES WITHINGS; ROBERT RIEGER

THE GOOD LIFE
A Sea View Villa at
Anantara Lawana

LOTUS POSITION

A TV hit show is drawing people from across the world to some sumptuous locations

THE LATEST SEASON OF HBO'S darkly comic show *The White Lotus* has Thailand front and centre as the location, so unsurprisingly local resorts are making the most of the limelight. The Anantara Lawana Koh Samui Resort featured in the show's premiere, and its Night of Indulgence culinary package includes cocktails named after characters Mook and Gaitok and an eight-course dinner at Tree Tops Signature Dining featuring decidedly luxe ingredients including caviar, lobster and Wagyu. ***anantara.com***

WORDS
CHRIS DWYER

THE PRODUCT

IF YOU'VE GOT US$2.4 million burning a hole in your pocket, then Sotheby's in Hong Kong has you covered with a Koenigsegg Regera, one of only 85 ever built, powered by a twin-turbocharged five-litre V-8 engine to generate an extraordinary 1,500 horsepower. Quite possibly the best bit of this Swedish high-performance beauty? There are just 20 miles on the clock.

The new face of LV

NO NAME IN luxury is as famed or iconic as Louis Vuitton, and this autumn the French maison is set to launch its first foray into make-up with La Beauté Louis Vuitton. At the helm as creative director of cosmetics will be Brit Dame Pat McGrath, named by *Vogue* as "the most influential make-up artist in the world". Although exact details have been kept under wraps, rumours abound of a collection featuring 55 lipsticks, eight eye palettes and ten lip balms, with leather make-up trunks and cases to house them.

COMPETITION

Win a two-night stay at Naumi Auckland Airport Hotel

BUSINESS TRAVELLER ASIA-PACIFIC has partnered with Naumi Auckland Airport Hotel to offer a lucky reader and their guest a two-night stay in an Oasis room, with breakfast for two included.

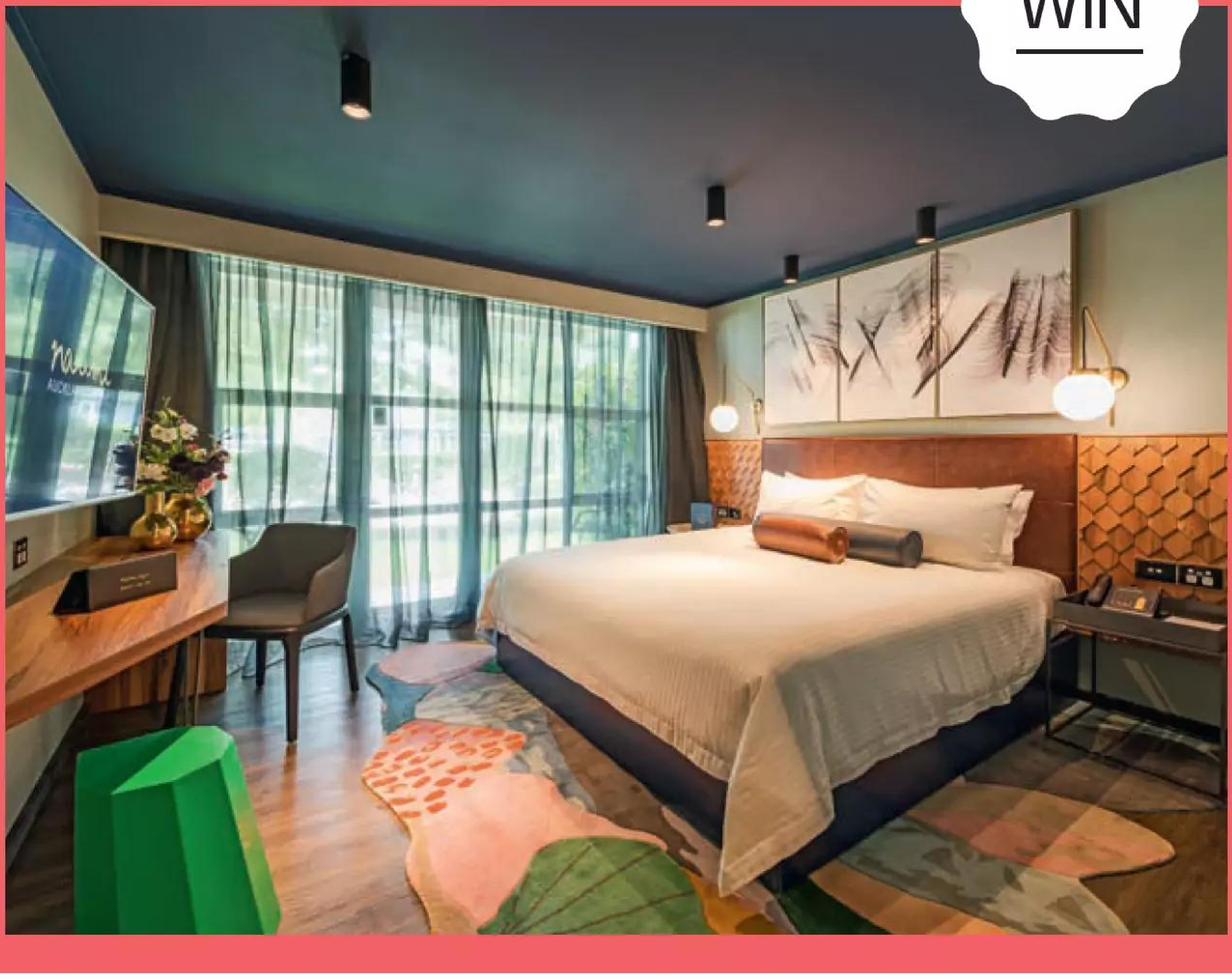
Just three minutes from Auckland Airport and a short drive to the city centre, the hotel is the perfect getaway – whether you're there to unwind, work or explore.

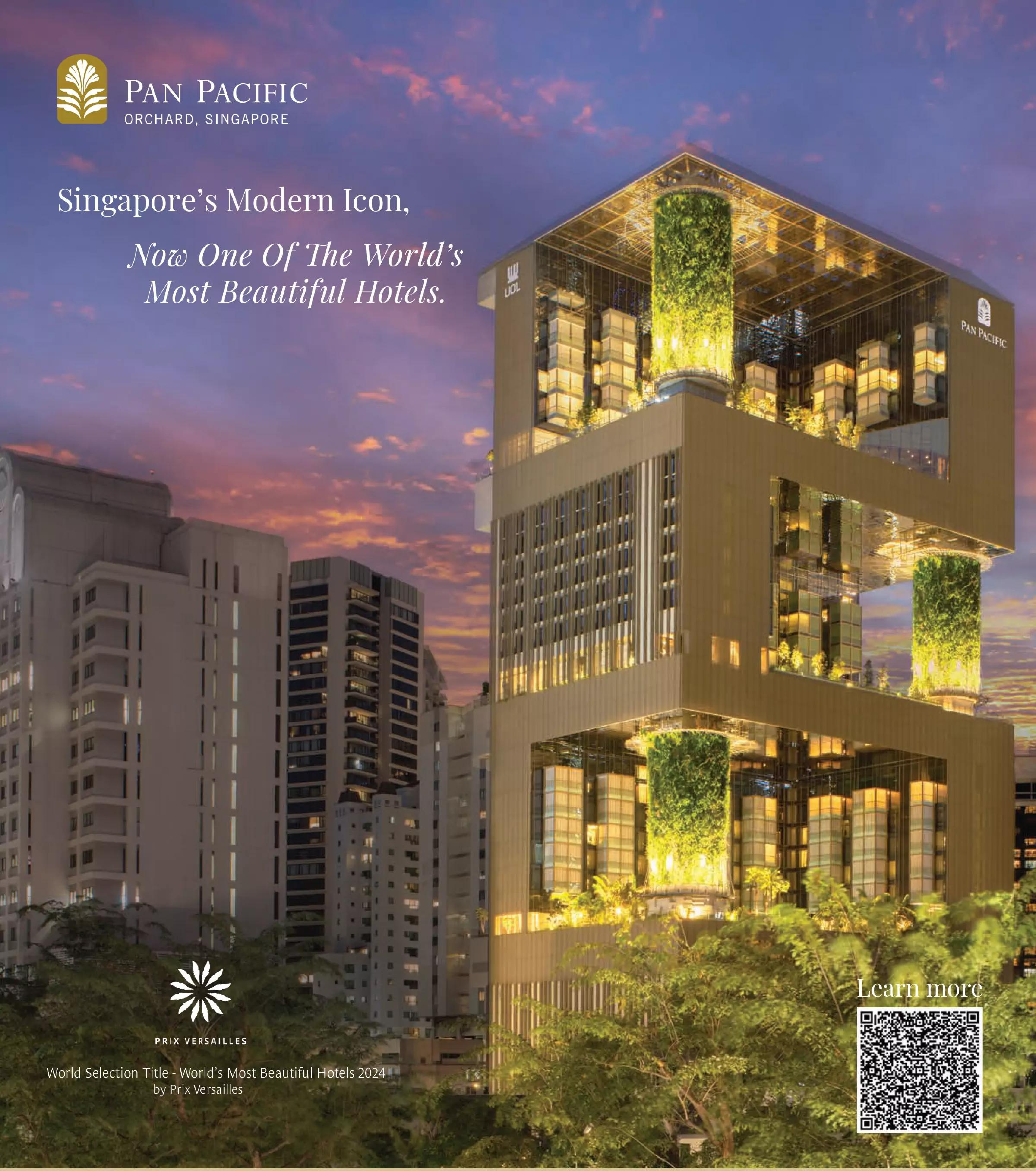
Discover serenity and style in the Oasis room, where eclectic interiors, lush furnishings and avant-garde art create a chic retreat. With floor-to-ceiling windows offering tranquil views, these rooms feature a private balcony or patio for added relaxation.

Take a dip in the hotel's heated pool, or savour delicious Asian fusion cuisine at Restaurant Lunar and Bar. There are also lush gardens, a fully equipped gym and stylish event spaces. For more information, visit naumihotels.com.

To enter, and see terms and conditions, go to businesstraveller.com/competitions

WIN

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PAN PACIFIC | DISCOVERY

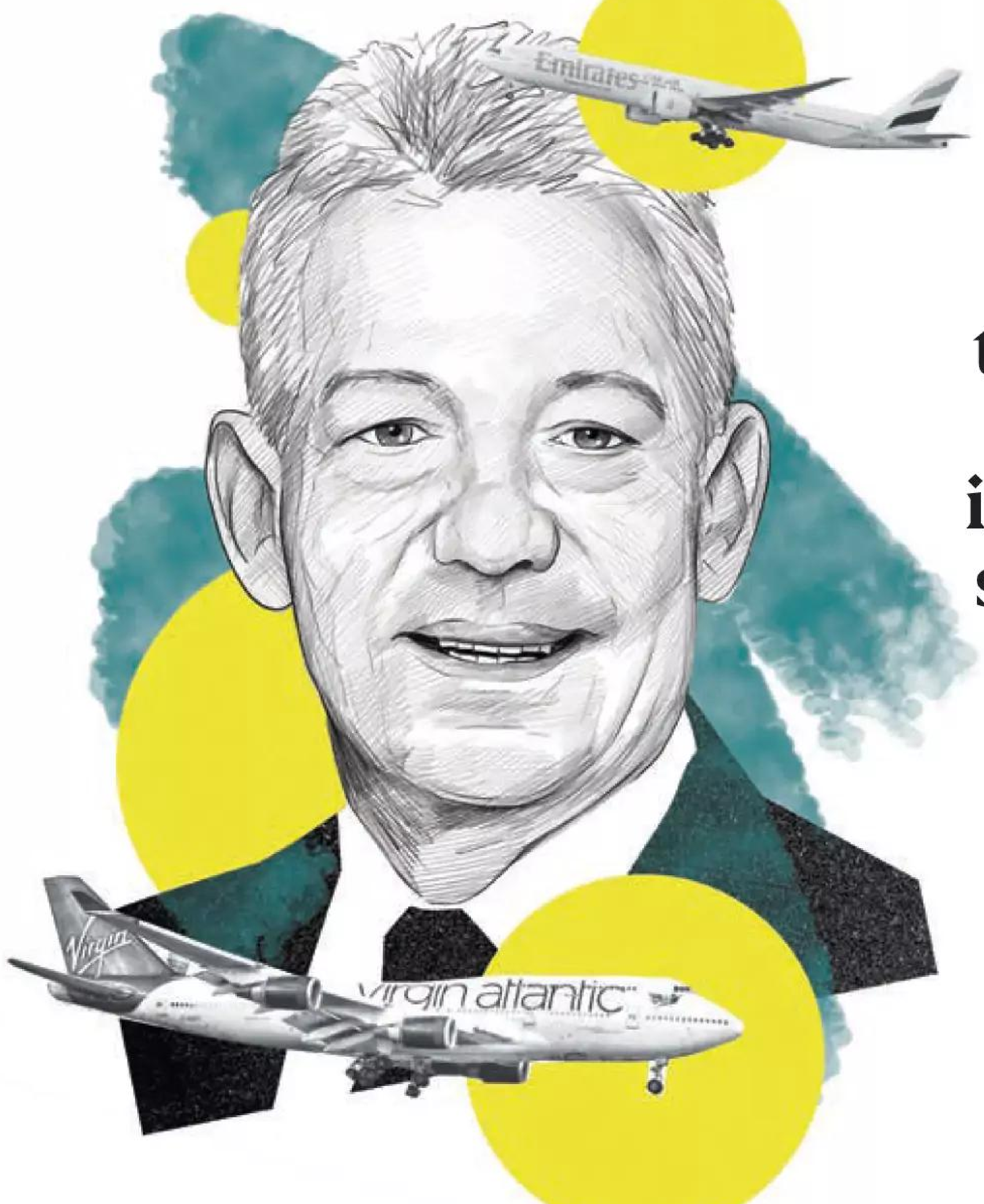
Insight

Expert opinions on the future of travel

THE BIG INTERVIEW

WITH PAUL GRIFFITHS

CEO OF DUBAI AIRPORTS



> ‘The less time we detain our customers, the happier they are. Standing in line at airports should not exist’

Dan Ross chats to the CEO of Dubai Airports about the Emirate’s growth ambitions, customer experience and the challenge of sustainability

BIOGRAPHY

Paul Griffiths has been the CEO of Dubai Airports since 2007, overseeing the operation and development of DXB – the world’s busiest airport for international passengers – as well as Dubai World Central – Al Maktoum International (DWC). Before moving to Dubai, Paul was managing director of London’s Gatwick Airport and was also board director of the Virgin Travel Group.

ILLUSTRATIONS PAUL RYDING

Q&A

Tell us about your journey to becoming the CEO of one of the world’s best-connected airports?
I started in the airport business in 2003, working closely with Richard Branson in the Virgin Group for 14 years – first at Virgin Atlantic Airways and then Virgin Trains.

Branson’s ethos has always been to put the fun and romance back into travel in whatever mode that might be. I knew about pleasing customers and how to make that commercially successful.

At the time, Gatwick Airport was very conscious that it didn’t have a great reputation in the eyes of its customers – the airlines. We underwent a cultural transformation and facilitated the growth of airlines at Gatwick. As a result, I got noticed in Dubai.

In the year 2000, Emirates put in a very large order of the A380. The late, great Maurice Flanagan, who started Emirates back in the 80s, said to my boss, Sheikh Ahmed: “Unless you sort the airport out, these planes will arrive and we’ll have gridlock and chaos. We’ve got to get someone to sort this out for us.” The head-hunter called me and it sounded like a great opportunity.

We became one of the top airports for international travel ten years ago and we’re determined to keep that crown. Pre-pandemic, we were under 90 million passengers, and in 2024, we were projected to reach at least 93 million. *Editor’s note: The actual figure, published after this interview, was 92.3 million.*

What strategies have enabled Dubai’s leap to become the second busiest airport in the world in 2024? And how do you plan to maintain this?
Sheikh Ahmed told me the only key performance indicator is to never constrain the growth of aviation. It’s so important to the city. We’re a key part of the strategic supply chain for our 90 airline customers, with the predominant two being Emirates and Flydubai. We have to support their growth ambitions. So, there’s always slots available and terminal capacity. The quality of the infrastructure is equally important, so we’ve invested heavily over the past 15 years to support that. The big game-changer has been the way we’ve applied process and technology. We recognise that the airport breaks into two basic functions: the flow and the dwell parts.

→

Continued from overleaf

Can you tell us more about the flow and dwell?
Like the prison service, the less time we detain our customers, the happier they are! Standing in line in airports should not exist. We should stop building large-capacity terminal buildings just to allow people to queue up. The technology exists now to eliminate this. We need to be like a modern metro when it comes to check-in. We're working on trialling facial recognition when you walk into the airport that's married up with your booking and sent to immigration – so you're immediately cleared to leave the country. Then the only thing we need is a thorough but brief and non-intrusive security process. Within about three steps, all the formalities are done. That's the vision. We're getting close to that now.

This also creates more time and opportunities for people to enjoy the dwell spaces, which need to be incredibly comfortable with places to sit, have innovative products to inspire people, and great bars and restaurants. They've also got to be close to the aeroplanes, so there's no anxiety involved in getting to the gate.

Many people hate the airport experience. How can you revolutionise this?
We want to make travel more personal. We want to take all the stress out and bring the emotion and romance back. We want to make it feel like it's for the select few, like how it was in the 50s, but actually make it for the very many.

Have you taken inspiration from other global airports?
I'm quite forensic when I travel. I wouldn't say there's a single airport that's got everything right, but I've looked at best practice. Changi's good. I always remember the positive attitude of its immigration staff who say "Welcome to Singapore" and sound really genuine and pleased that you've come to their city.

We embarked on a massive cultural change programme. We've put a lot of training and development into the people we've recruited over the last ten years, and our stakeholders..

How have recent issues in the region affected peoples' desire to connect through the UAE?
I've had a lot of people comment on that, but it's not borne out in the numbers. I think people's perception of geography is very different from the reality. We are not in any immediate situation where we have any cause for concern. In fact, we've seen an influx of people coming here from all over the world – the number of people taking up permanent residence in Dubai increases steadily each month. I don't think you need to spend much time here to find out why. It's a great and dynamic environment. It's built around growth. We're fortunate that our GDP growth is between 4 and 6 per cent consistently. Growth of people through the airport over the past 15 years has been between 7 and 8 per cent on a compound basis every year.

How has the government's approach to aviation shaped the growth of DXB?
The aerospace sector is viewed by the government as a strategic imperative for the growth agenda. It's good to be in an industry where the value is recognised at the very highest level. We've had a dynasty of rulers from the same family since the UAE was formed in 1971. That consistency of vision has been at the heart of the country's success. Earlier in the year, the ruler Sheikh Mohammed launched D33, which is about doubling the GDP, the number of residents, visitors and the quality of what we do by 2033. It's fantastic to have those long-term programmes that everyone is solidly behind.

If you look at the tourism numbers and the hotel beds that have been added to the inventory over the past few years, it's dramatic. We've matched that with being able to add airport capacity. And the airlines have done that by introducing new services. Flydubai grew by 19 per cent last year. And nearly 90 of the foreign airlines have grown by 11 per cent. Everyone has contributed to the growth.

People get hot under the collar about the idea that we're subsidised by the government, but we're not. All the entities are run as commercial businesses. The difference is, the government happens to be the owner and the shareholder. So we are allowed to operate in a way that is competitive using the same parameters as any other operation around the world. Of course, the government then reaps the rewards of that and can reinvest in the sector. It's a good model and I don't think there's anywhere in the world that has such a proactive and successful commercial model for its aviation enterprise.

How does Dubai achieve its growth goals while also being sustainable?
It's a big challenge and there's no silver bullet. There have to be thousands of incremental steps towards this, and we're taking a significant number.

We are blessed with a great degree of sunshine and we've dramatically increased the amount of solar energy we generate. We recently signed a deal with the local electricity supplier to install around 40 megawatts of power-generating panels.

We've also replaced hundreds of thousands of bulbs – the runway lighting is exclusively LED now. We're converting all of our ground-based vehicles to electricity or hydrogen. The aim is not to license any vehicle to be on the aerodrome that isn't powered by some form of renewable energy within a couple of years. One of the challenges with ground transportation is that, during the summer in particular, we need to drive the air conditioning quite hard to keep people cool. So, I think hydrogen is probably going to be the most practical fuel.

Rather than say that we're going to be carbon neutral by 2050 or achieve a 30 per cent reduction by 2030 (which to me is a little bit of a cop out), I say: Show me what we've done over the past 30 days that demonstrates we've made a positive impact on limiting our emissions and improving the quality of the environment compared to the 30-day prior period. **BT**

> **'We want to make travel more personal. We want to take all the stress out and bring the emotion and romance back'**

Expansion of Al Maktoum International (DWC) Airport

DWC WILL BE
500% larger than DXB

IT WILL HAVE
5
RUNWAYS

AND CAPACITY FOR
150
MILLION PASSENGERS ANNUALLY WITHIN THE NEXT DECADE

ULTIMATELY INCREASING TO
260
MILLION PASSENGERS ANNUALLY

WORDS BY
JAKE JONES

HOW MUCH ARE YOUR AIR MILES WORTH?

A handy ratio can help you decide when to redeem and when to pay cash

ONE OF THE most common questions people ask regarding their points and miles is the classic, "Is this redemption worth it?" Trust me, I get it. We spend a lot of time, energy and money accruing our coveted points and miles, and we should make sure we are smart in the way we use them.

To understand how to answer this question, we first have to establish the fact that we always have two options when it comes to booking a flight: we can pay with cash, or we can pay with miles. When we pay with miles, it's not that we are getting the flight for free, it's just that we're not using the cash in our bank account to pay for it. Points and miles inherently hold a degree of monetary value as they can be used to purchase something tangible, such as a seat on an airplane. But exactly how much is one mile worth?

An easy way to quantify the value of your miles is by comparing the price of the flight in cash versus the price of the flight in miles. For example, you may come across a one-way flight between New York and Chicago that costs either US$155 or 13,000 miles. In this instance, 13,000 miles is giving you a US$155 value. But of course, cash prices and award fares are constantly fluctuating. We can simplify these numbers into a ratio that can be applied across all flights.

Take the price of the flight in dollars, divide by the price in miles, and multiply by 100. The resulting number is a ratio known across the industry as Cents Per Point. In other words, if we are talking in dollars, how many cents is one point or mile giving you on this particular redemption? The higher this number, the more value you are getting out of your points or miles.

Intuitively, the next question will be: "How do I know if this value is high enough? What is the benchmark?" A good question, but one that doesn't have a definitive answer. After all, there are many different points and miles "currencies" in the market. Just like one US dollar does not equate to one euro or pound, one United mile is not the same as one American mile or one Delta mile. However, utilising a wide range of current and future flight pricing data points, we can create a broad scope of value buckets that can generally be applied across most airlines:

Anything **below 1.0** should be a hard stop – there are too many good redemptions out there for you to settle for something that low. Anything **between 1.0 and 1.3** should be classified as a "fine" redemption. I would still lean toward saving my miles and using cash in this range, but the closer you get to 1.3 the more reasonable the redemption becomes. **Between 1.3 and 1.5** should be classified as a "good" redemption – this range is likely where most of your standard redemptions will fall, which is why it is typically referred to as the expectation. Anything **above 1.5** should be considered a great redemption.

> 'A broad scope of value buckets can generally be applied across most airlines'

Of course, this kind of analysis is assuming you have the luxury of choosing between cash or miles. Sometimes you may not have the cash to pay for the flight, but you have the miles to do so. If that is the case, that is totally okay. That just means your miles hold a slightly elevated value for *you*. Some people often fall victim to what I like to call "redemption paralysis" because they become so fixated on getting the highest possible value that they become averse to pulling the trigger on *any* redemption.

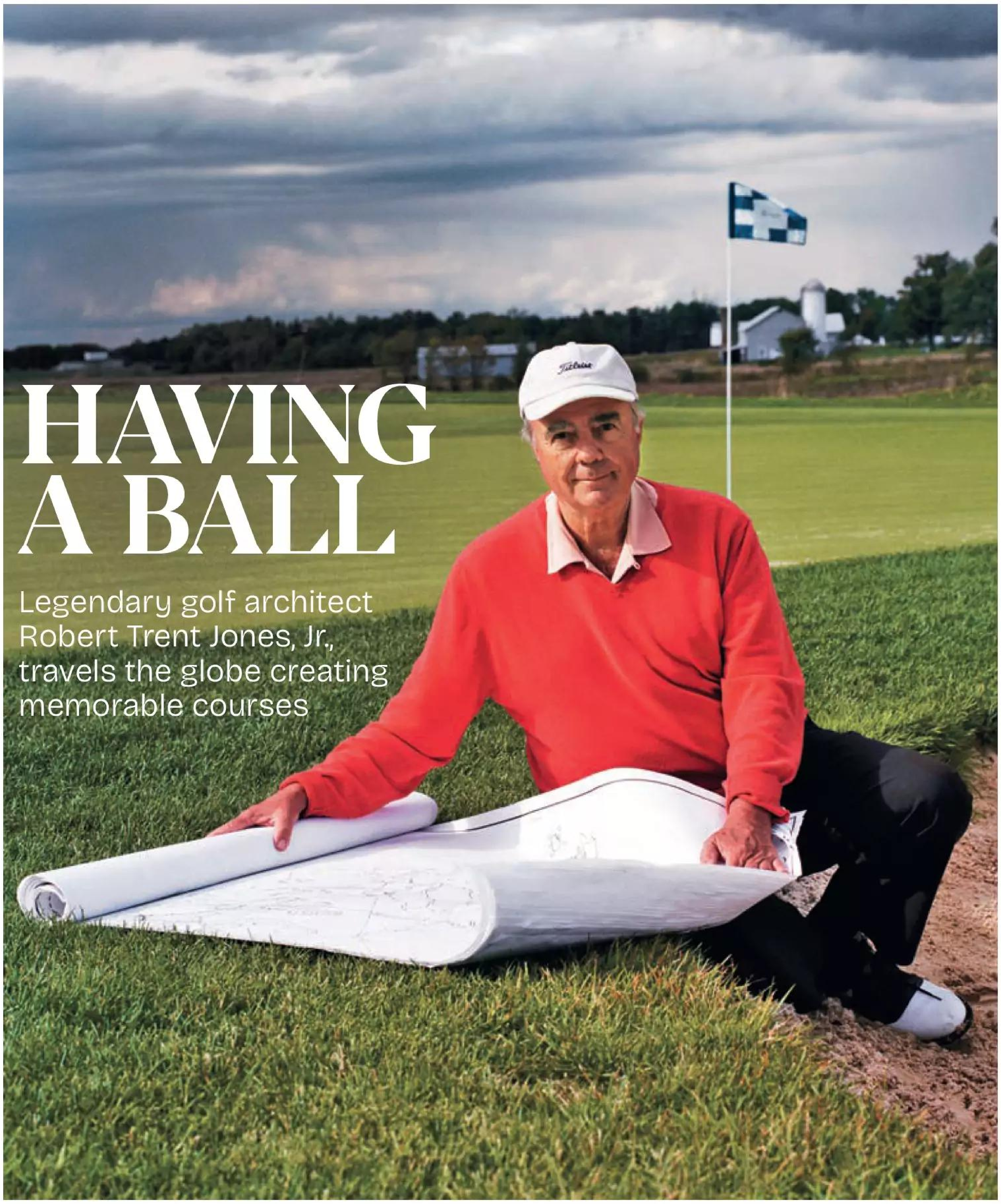
Remember, these numbers are just intended for you to gauge against what the market is suggesting your points and miles are worth. At the end of the day, if the redemption is worthwhile in your eyes, that is all that should matter. **BT**

IMAGES **GETTY IMAGES**

WORDS
JEFF WALLACH

HAVING A BALL

Legendary golf architect Robert Trent Jones, Jr., travels the globe creating memorable courses



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Robert Trent Jones, Jr.; Costa Palmas, Baja California Sur, Mexico; hole four at Hoiana Shores, Quang Nam, Vietnam

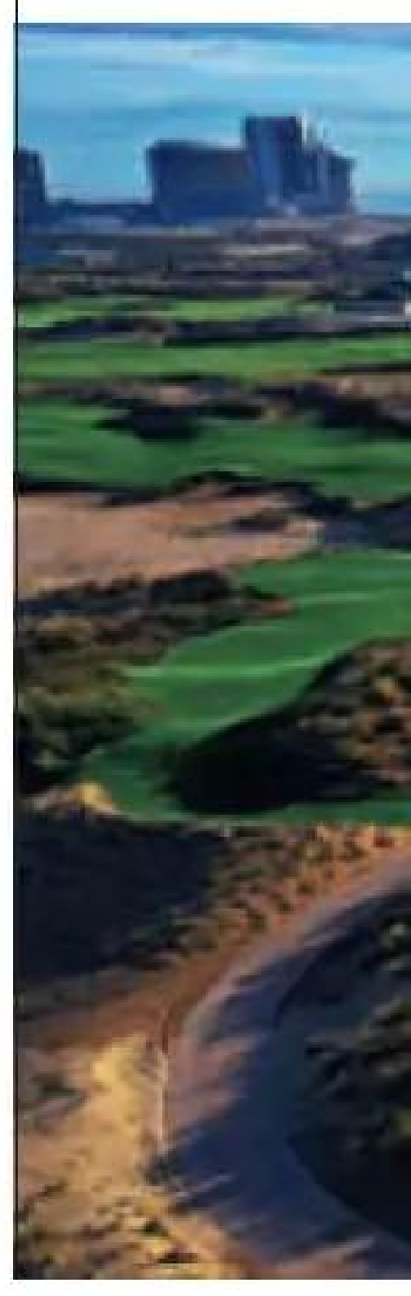
Q & A

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECT Robert Trent Jones, Jr. has designed more than 300 courses in 50 countries on six continents – on Earth, only Antarctica lacks an RTJ II layout. And at 85, Jones is still traversing the globe with projects in Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Grenada, Thailand, Vietnam, Egypt, England, Italy and across the US. Jones's living artwork reveals a man who creates on many levels, and who sees his pursuit of golf design as a metaphysical journey. Like the best artists and writers, he employs subtext and symbolism, imagery and illusion, as well as a range of other techniques from the verbal and visual arts to express aspects of philosophy, drama and aesthetics. And his courses tell stories. Jones recently shared his own stories with us – about golf, travel and golf travel.

What is it about this game that travels so well?
Golf originated in Holland in the 13th century when seafaring people took sticks and wooden balls and played while their ships were being provisioned. They played with the Scottish, and eventually the game travelled with the Scots and the British Empire. It came to the US through destinations like Newport, Rhode Island. Unlike other sports with rigid fields – like tennis and football – golf adapted itself to different terrains. In New England golf architects found granite outcroppings and trees, and adopted the links game where there were no trees. At Winged Foot, in New York, they built greens on top of the rock. In San Francisco, architects like A.W. Tillinghast formed the greens as continuations of the sandy fairways. In Japan they play three or four holes and stop at a teahouse and have a formal meal for 20 minutes, then go play more golf. These kinds of cultural and geographical nuances always give the game a distinctive flavour.

What drives people to travel for golf? Couldn't they just keep playing the same course?
For me, adventure drives golf travel – you want to get out of where you are and have another experience. Playing golf in an "alien" context – like in Shanghai, even though the game is familiar to you – will be different from anything you've experienced before.

One day when we were working on a course in Desaru, Malaysia, I walked across a log that had fallen in a putrid swamp and a snake slithered away. When my guide took out his machete I knew we were in trouble. I asked him, "What's up?" He said, "It's a krait. If it bites you, smoke one cigarette and say goodbye." Two weeks earlier on the same site a wild elephant pushed over our



‘Adventure drives golf travel – you want to have another experience’

construction shack during the night. And we found out that tigers had been coming out of the jungle to lick salt on the beach near to where we were working. That was a difficult job. Our supervisors kept quitting.

In South Africa, the Leopard Creek Country Club was laid out next to a game reserve, which was fenced in, but the animals don’t care. They see golfers as something to eat, which is why players should carry a rifle as their 15th club. At our Wild Coast Sun golf course in the same country wild monkeys run onto the sixth green and steal your golf ball.

Sometimes we’re able to express the adventure of our sport by creating heroic golf holes, where you might need to cross an ocean-filled chasm to reach the green. To me golf involves a quest on which you never give up. You may have to back-pedal and regroup and create strategies, but you’re like Odysseus. You’re always out there searching. And if you go searching, you’ll find something.

You used to travel 270 days a year pursuing your work. What was that experience like?
I enjoy being in the air. I’m in a good space and I don’t fear anything. I look down upon the great landscapes and relax and read and maybe write a poem. I’m an extrovert, so my seat-mates get to converse with me, whether they like it or not. A good travel tip I’d offer is: accept the food wherever you are.

And I like airports, especially when the planes take off and land. I’m big on long runways with no potholes. When you build golf courses in remote places there are no airports. You land in grass fields, and the winds can be dangerous. In New Zealand in the 1970s I flew a plane with no direction finder, and the compass wouldn’t work. My local partner told me to watch the topography to find a landing place and to stay left of the mountains.

As for modern airports, Zurich is very efficient and has good places to sleep in or next to, and good food. I went there on my way to Davos in winter, and used to head into town for oompah music, long sausages, pretzels and beer. I’m an Earth Day kind of guy and Singapore Changi Airport has lots of lovely plants and flowers growing on the walls and they’re dripping with water, not all steel and glass.

As a middle-class postwar American I’ve been privileged to travel in good seats with beautiful food service. But today it’s become more of a lottery and most people carry their own baggage and it’s a struggle. Now it’s an endless effort to get from one plane to the next, and that’s less fun. Some of the rules can be confusing, too – like when the crew times out and it’s midnight and there are no hotel rooms. That might be good for the crews, and for safety, but not so good for the passengers.

Any non-golf destinations on your bucket list?
Bhutan and Machu Picchu. I’m interested in the spiritual places of other cultures. I’ve travelled the globe like the Moon has and I haven’t been eclipsed yet. You can’t black me out. **BT**

THE HOLE TRUTH

Three of Robert Trent Jones Jr.’s best golf courses

CHAMBERS BAY

The crown jewel of the Jones portfolio is carved out of a former sand and gravel mine south of Seattle. The sustainable reclamation project hosted the 2016 US Open.

PRINCE COURSE

Princeville’s highly ranked course on Kauai, Hawaii is among the most dramatic RTJ II projects worldwide, playing through jungles, across ravines and over mango forests.

HOIANA SHORES

The top-rated course in Vietnam (per *Golf Digest*) employs drought-tolerant grasses and was precisely crafted to blend with a pristine natural environment of dunes and beach.

IMAGES EVAN SCHILLER; GARY LISBON; ROB PERRY

WORDS
HANNAH BRANDLER

OPINION

HEIGHTENED EMOTIONS

Why do we cry more at altitude?

I **STEAL A** glance to my left. An 18-inch IFE monitor shows familiar animated characters – a cowboy, space ranger and Bo Peep. While Pixar's *Toy Story* plays silently, the images are accompanied by a series of sniffles and the occasional cough to disguise a whimper.

Moments later, a middle-aged businessman emerges from the seat, the lapel of his tailored suit dampened, his head bowed and eyes bloodshot as he scurries to the lavatory to compose himself.

In any other circumstance, it might be unusual for a fully grown man to be weeping at a children's animation – but something strange happens to us at 35,000 feet. Over the years, I've inexplicably shed tears at trashy rom-coms that, on land, have left me dry-eyed. We've all been there. But what prompts such on-board weepiness?

Emotional environment

At its core, we're describing a group of strangers locked in an aluminium tube hurtling through the sky. It makes perfect sense that such an alien environment might trigger our vulnerable side. The inherent stresses of travelling also take a toll on our emotional stability, from the frustration of delays to the irritation of noisy neighbours – not to mention a sense of being cut off from the outside world.

Physiologically, lower oxygen levels can also contribute to mild hypoxia, which affects our mental and emotional state.

Then there's the purpose of the trip itself. Fly-and-flop travellers are likely to be in a cheerier mood than those returning from a work trip where they lost an all-important pitch. The tragic combination of jet lag and burnout, too, are favourable foundations for a weepy journey.

Blubbering in business

Today's cocoon-like suites in business class also provide the privacy to let your emotions run loose – particularly if there's a sliding door to contain your floods of tears. Who knew the real privilege of flying business class was a therapeutic one?

Passengers retreat into a cinematic shell of sorts, captivated by the screen stretching the span of the seat back, while noise-cancelling headphones drown out the engine noise (or fellow teary passengers). Some of us intentionally channel our emotions by opting for tear-jerkers such as *Marley & Me* and *The Notebook,* while others find themselves getting emotional at the slightest bit of sentimentality in an action film.

> 'The free-flowing drinks trolley helps to crank emotions up a notch'

FLIGHTY FEELINGS Altitude, cabin pressure and travel stresses can make tears more likely when up in the air

The free-flowing drinks trolley only helps to crank emotions up a notch. One drink in, and you're still able to blink back tears. Three drinks pass your lips, however, and your wine glass becomes a vessel for tipsy tears. You can't even excuse your watery eyes on spicy inflight meals, since low humidity and decreased air pressure numb taste-buds at altitude.

In economy class, travellers might find themselves even closer to tears thanks to the onslaught of inconsiderate space-invading neighbours, or worse, passengers filing their nails beside you (yes, this has happened). The only consolation is that a fellow passenger might volunteer a shoulder to cry on.

I recall a particularly low moment during the pandemic, watching BBC drama *Time* while sandwiched in the middle seat of an economy cabin. My face mask became a pouch for a puddle of tears, but instead of sympathy, neighbouring passengers leaned away from me fearing my watery eyes were a sign of Covid-19.

While societal pressures might frown upon such outward displays, I'm a strong proponent of treating your journey as an emotional outlet. We should embrace the cathartic release provided by a flight and enjoy feeling that bit lighter when we land. Perhaps we'll even see airlines sell it as a form of th-air-apy.

If your tears have not yet smudged the ink on this page – then enjoy the emotional ride! **BT**

IMAGE ADOBE STOCK

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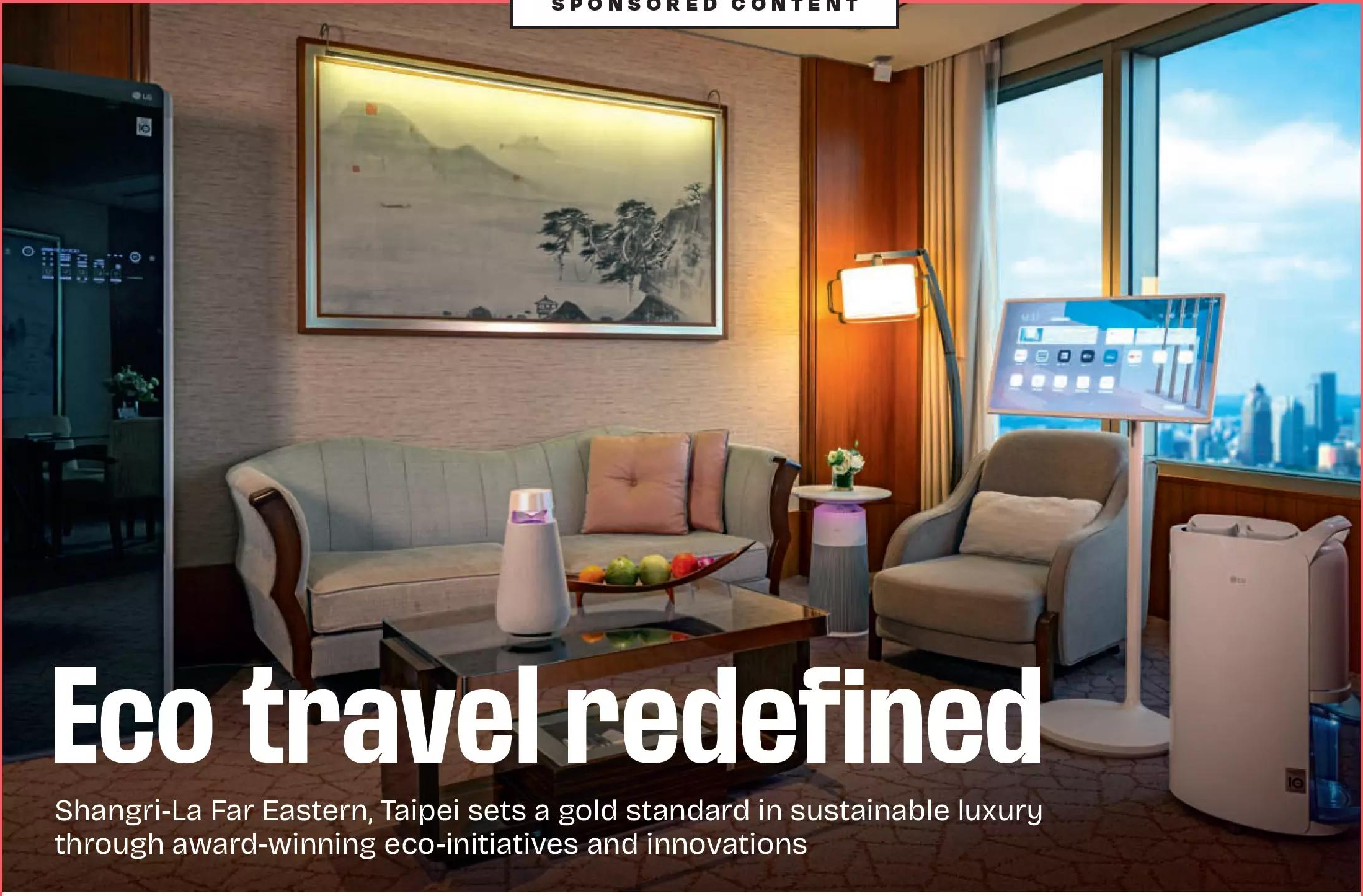

Eco travel redefined

Shangri-La Far Eastern, Taipei sets a gold standard in sustainable luxury through award-winning eco-initiatives and innovations

IN AN ERA WHERE environmental consciousness is paramount, travellers are increasingly opting for eco-friendly lifestyles, including their choice of hotels.

Shangri-La Far Eastern, Taipei has recently been honoured with the "Taipei Nice Stay Sustainable Awards" and the "Taipei Green Hotel" certification from the Taipei City Department of Information and Tourism, along with the "Green Mark Hotel Bronze-Level Certification" from the Ministry of Environment, Executive Yuan. These prestigious accolades underscore the hotel's unwavering commitment to environmental protection.

Marco Vazzoler, Area General Manager of Shangri-La Far Eastern, Taipei, highlighted that the hotel was also certified under the international ISO 14001 environmental management system as early as 2001 and has maintained its certification for over 20 years. Some of the ways it's achieved this status is through sustainable initiatives such as using energy-saving light bulbs, regenerative lifts, water-saving devices and eco-certified cleaning products, protecting water sources through sewage treatment facilities, and encouraging guests to reduce linen and towel changes.

In terms of food and beverage, the hotel launched the "Rooted in Nature" programme to promote locally sourced ingredients. In recent years, it's executed the Shangri-La Group's plastic reduction plan, including the "Towards a Plastic-Free Future" initiative by fully eliminating the use of bottled water. The goal is to reduce the average use of single-use plastics in each occupied room by 50% of the 2019 level by 2026. Last year, the hotel introduced the "Love Green Sustainable Wedding" and updated its takeaway packaging to include zero plastic. Each year, the hotel participates in the global "Earth Hour" event to raise environmental awareness, contributing to pollution reduction. In 2024, a collaboration with BMW launched the "Stay & Drive Green" room package, allowing guests to experience electric cars during their stay. Additionally, the hotel partnered with LG Electronics to introduce the "LG ThinQ Travel Suite Package," featuring smart, energy-saving appliances for a low-carbon experience. In 2025, the "Dine & Stay Sustainable Dining Journey," allows guests to enjoy a hearty breakfast and dining credit worth NT$3,500 at Marco Polo Italian Restaurant, as well as an exclusive Shangri-La eco-friendly tote bag and reusable cutlery set.

It's My
Shangri-La

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The LG ThinQ Travel Suite Package; exclusive hotel merchandise; sustainable guest amenities

For more information, visit shangri-la.com/taipei

Indonesia's WILD playground

WORDS STEVE WHITE

Dawn at Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park

IMAGES **ADOBE STOCK**

Four of the archipelago's cities make for perfect bases to explore the country's rugged and spectacular landscapes

VOLCANO GUIDE

PEAK GUIDE PAR EXCELLENCE

There's only one place to go for information on all of Indonesia's significant volcanoes and that's **gunungbagging.com** where you'll find maps, descriptions of routes, contacts for guides and much else.

INDONESIA'S MANY THOUSANDS OF islands sprawl more than 5,000km, almost bridging the entire distance between Singapore and Australia, and dividing the Pacific and Indian oceans. Sitting broadly along the equator, the landscape is exotic in the extreme. Its seas are richly biodiverse and break onto coral reefs and palm-fringed beaches aplenty. As part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, the forested interior is punctured by the primaeval cones of volcanoes, most of them still active, their summits an unworldly vision of tortured rock reeking of sulphur.

The country's fast-growing cities teem with a young population hungry to grab the opportunities that Indonesia's growing wealth affords. For the visitor too, all this means opportunities abound. If it's work that brings you to Indonesia's urban centres, make sure you leave time to explore the wild playground beyond, too.

TOP: A stroll around the crater of Anak Krakatau **ABOVE:** 25hours Hotel Jakarta The Oddbird

JAKARTA

The traffic may be famously bad, but all these people are here for a reason. The trick is to stay close to where you need to be for work and then plot your escape carefully to make the most of any days off. One cool, brand-new hotel option, for instance, is the 25hours Hotel Jakarta The Oddbird in mid-town near the Senayan MRT, with plenty of shopping, meeting and eating places around. Happily, once your business is done, the western end of Java around Jakarta offers plenty to explore.

The obvious starting point is Krakatoa, as much of the world calls it, surely the most recognisable name on any list of the country's volcanoes. Once an island off the west end of Java, it blew apart in 1883 in an explosion that in one way or another was felt around the world.

Today some of the remnants of the island are open to visitors, but in December 2018, Anak Krakatau (child of Krakatau), where a fresh cinder cone had been rising, saw another major event producing a tsunami and reducing the cone to less than half its height. A 2km exclusion zone has since been declared, but you can still access Rakata, the most interesting fragment of the original island.

Many operators squeeze it all into a long day trip from Jakarta, but you'll spend half the day on the road just getting to the coast and back. Staying on Rakata, where you can snorkel and then camp amid recovering jungle that's home to a population of sizeable monitor lizards, is a chance not to be missed.

If actually climbing a live volcano is on your wish list, then the closest option is in Mount Gede Pangrango National Park, a two-hour drive from Jakarta. Pangrango is the taller of the park's two peaks, more shapely but with a forested summit that means views are limited. Its neighbour Gede is craggy, dramatically torn by past eruptions and commands wonderful views.

Allow at least eight hours round trip from the lovely Cibodas Botanical Garden to either summit. If possible, avoid coming on a weekend when it can seem like half of Jakarta has had the same idea.

Another option around two to three hours travelling from Jakarta is Mount Halimun Salak National Park. Various operators offer half-day and full-day mountain bike trips, depending on your starting point, accessing a network of trails that run through the forested corridor that connects the two peaks of the park's name, with options for all levels of biker.

YOGYAKARTA

Proudly still bearing its centuries-old status as a sultanate, this city is the nation's cultural capital. At its heart lies the sultan's *kraton*, or palace, while to the west of Yogya lies the must-see Borobudur temple, an enormous Buddhist

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→ complex that echoes the majesty of Java's volcanoes.

The Phoenix Hotel makes a fittingly elegant place to stay in town, or for a serious splurge, there's the magnificent Amanjiwo resort near Borobudur. Then, once you are ready to explore, a pair of Java's volcanoes rise to the north of the city, just 90 minutes' drive away.

Closest of the pair is Merapi (2,910m), one of the most active volcanoes in the world, and consequently often closed to climbers – as it is currently. The good news is that nearby sits the even bigger but much less feisty Merbabu (3,145m), their differences captured in their names, with Merapi meaning "fiery mountain" while Merbabu is "mountain of ash".

There are a number of possible trailheads with the small village of Selo, on a saddle between the two peaks, the popular option from Yogya, though the trail from Suwanting also brings great views of Merapi. Allow around six or seven hours up and at least four hours down.

For a change of scene, the Gua Pindul cave system around 40km east of Yogyakarta offers caving, tubing and rafting adventures including a stretch on an underground river. Many local operators can oblige with half-day trips out of the city.

SURABAYA

This bustling port city played a role in the fight for Indonesian independence following the end of WWII. The architecture of older parts of the city still offers a flavour of those days, nowhere more so than at the Hotel Majapahit Surabaya. Though now surrounded by busy city streets, this gracious old property was designed by the famous Sarkies family and has bags of throwback charm. →

ABOVE: Before the trek, relax in style at Amanjiwo **BELOW:** Beautiful Borobudur has to be on the must-see list for any visitor to Yogyakarta

TEAM SPIRIT

CORPORATIONS GO WILD

Will Huetinck is director of Learn with Dragonfly, an organisation based in Hong Kong that has for more than 20 years conducted outdoor programmes for schools and corporations in Asia and beyond. The company has worked with major multinationals, including Nomura, HSBC and Google.

Tell us about your corporate programmes.

We have held programmes in Sumatra that involved a multi-day trek to see orangutans in the wild. Our locations have adventure activities like kayaking, rock climbing, canyoning, mountain biking and raft building, as well as cultural and community service activities. Our Malaysian Borneo programmes are in Sabah. We have snorkelling in the off-shore islands and scuba courses. There's also a stay at a rustic jungle lodge in the Crocker Range to learn survival techniques from a last-of-his-kind native hunter raised in these mountains.

What kind of objectives do corporations have for these types of activity?

The corporations we work with mostly want team-bonding and team-building activities, and/or a physical challenge.

Any notable experiences you'd like to share?

With Google we were focused on emotional intelligence and how individual talents can come together for the betterment of the group – quite unique at the time [2017].

In what ways are outdoor programmes better than the usual run-of-the-mill corporate activities?

Experience is the best teacher, and the outdoors presents new and changing environments and factors. There's a feeling of pushing yourself physically and mentally in a situation that might be uncomfortable – it's more authentic. When we take a group coasteering, the ocean is right there with you when you cross over a section of water on a rope. It all expands our horizons. Climbing indoors with air-conditioning may be a lot more comfortable, but it doesn't offer the same degree of challenge or feeling of overcoming obstacles.

Tumpak Sewu waterfall, to the south of Semeru

> ‘The lake is the product of one of the largest known eruptions in human history, around 70,000 to 80,000 years ago’

Undoubtedly, a visit to the stupendous scenery of the Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park, a few hours to the south of the city, has to be top of the list for any visitor to Surabaya.

Beyond Probolinggo, you turn up a sinuous mountain road that eventually emerges on the edge of one of the world’s greatest volcanic spectacles. The sight is scarcely believable: a vast moonscape of a caldera with a clutch of furrowed cinder cones at its centre and another enormous volcano – Semeru (3,676m), Java’s tallest – looming in the background, often emitting puffs of ash.

A day trip here may mean obscured midday views and a fight with crowds of folk getting jeeps and horses across the Tengger Sand Sea to the peaks. Don’t cheat yourself. Stay at least one night to be able to climb to a viewpoint for sunrise and cross the caldera to walk up the peak of Bromo (2,329m) itself.

With more time, you could even consider a climb of Semeru, depending on your itinerary. You’ll need at least three days to walk in and get up and down, and that doesn’t include the travel to the area from Surabaya. The panorama from the top though is really something, with dozens of impressive peaks in view. It might just be the start of a fixation...

MEDAN

Indonesia’s biggest city outside Java has quadrupled in size in the last 50 years, driven largely by a huge boom in the rubber and palm oil industries. At the cost of the dense vegetation that until relatively recently cloaked almost all of Sumatra, a forest of high-rises now towers over the modernising but still relatively compact centre of the city. Stay here, perhaps at the Aryaduta Medan, a popular five-star hotel, and you’ll be handy for the train from the airport, and also have a wide choice of food and shops.

GO APE
Orangutan at Bukit Lawang

If you are looking for a memorable wildlife experience or just a supremely chilled place to hang out and do very little of anything for a few days, Bukit Lawang, 2.5hrs to the west of the city, is ideal. The village clings to the banks of the fast-moving Bahorok River on the edge of the Gunung Leuser National Park. Around it is a sanctuary for the rehabilitation of orangutans with estimates of their numbers ranging into the thousands.

A little further away is Lake Toba, a three-hour drive from Medan. At the main town of Parapat a ferry runs across this gigantic caldera lake to the tourist centre of Samosir.

The lake is the product of one of the largest known eruptions in human history, around 70,000 to 80,000 years ago, one so cataclysmic that it may have led to the death of much of the global population at the time.

Today its peaceful shores draw tourists from around the world, mostly to Samosir, the home of the Batak people and a wonderfully laid-back place with more than a whiff still of its backpacker and banana pancake heyday of the late 20th century. Come here to enjoy hikes among the unusual tropical pine forests, visit Batak villages and sample the local fare, swim in the lake and generally kick back in the refreshingly cooler air.

One of the lake’s major sights, the Sipiso-Piso waterfall, lies a couple of hours away at its northern end. There, an underground river springs from a cliff in a photogenic 120m leap. It’s a popular stop for domestic tourists, so try to come at the beginning or end of the day and avoid weekends. **BT**

IMAGES **ADOBE STOCK, ALAMY, ALAIN BONNARDEAUX/UNSPLASH, GETTY IMAGES**

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HERITAGE MEETS HIGH RISE IN
JAKARTA

Here, sacred Javanese-style palaces inspire crowds of skyscrapers, blurring centuries of architectural excellence for a truly unique city experience. Whether you're passing through for a meeting or making yourself at home, Jakarta is the hottest spot for modern bleisure travellers. If we were you, this is where we'd be working and unwinding. →

JAKARTA CITY

City slicker

With its capital status in question, one thing will never change. Jakarta is Indonesia's true commercial heart

Jakarta's natural business acumen manifests in the world-renowned Sudirman Central Business District (SCBD), a sprawling hub characterised by twinkling high rises, deluxe hotels, and hordes of international office space. SCBD is positioned in the Golden Triangle of Jakarta, the fastest-evolving business district in the Asia-Pacific region. Famed for its international appeal, it's no wonder Jakarta welcomes millions of business travellers each year.

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

To streamline this business traveller pipeline, the Indonesian government announced 14 new National Strategic Projects in November last year.

These plans are spread across several provinces in hopes of refining Jakarta's functionality and positioning it as a reliable business destination.

One of these new projects is Pantai Indah Kapuk 2 (PIK2). Presented by Indonesian organisations Agung Sedayu Group and Salim Group, PIK2 is an integrated city with various accommodations, facilities, and services. Dubbed "The New Jakarta City", it spans North Jakarta and Banten, covering roughly 6,000 hectares and two reclaimed islands and it's only seven-minutes from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport.

WORK, STAY, PLAY

This area is expected to bring 20 million tourist visits and 10 million new jobs, according to Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, former Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy. PIK2 is still expanding, increasing opportunities for professionals to meet, stay, and work in the city. These projects are intended to generate a multiplier effect, where we can hope to see the full effect of the projects within the next five to seven years. In the meantime, as Jakarta expands its potential, more cohesive transport links become non-negotiable. From local business meetings to international quarterly →

SMART DECISIONS Jakarta is developing its business areas.

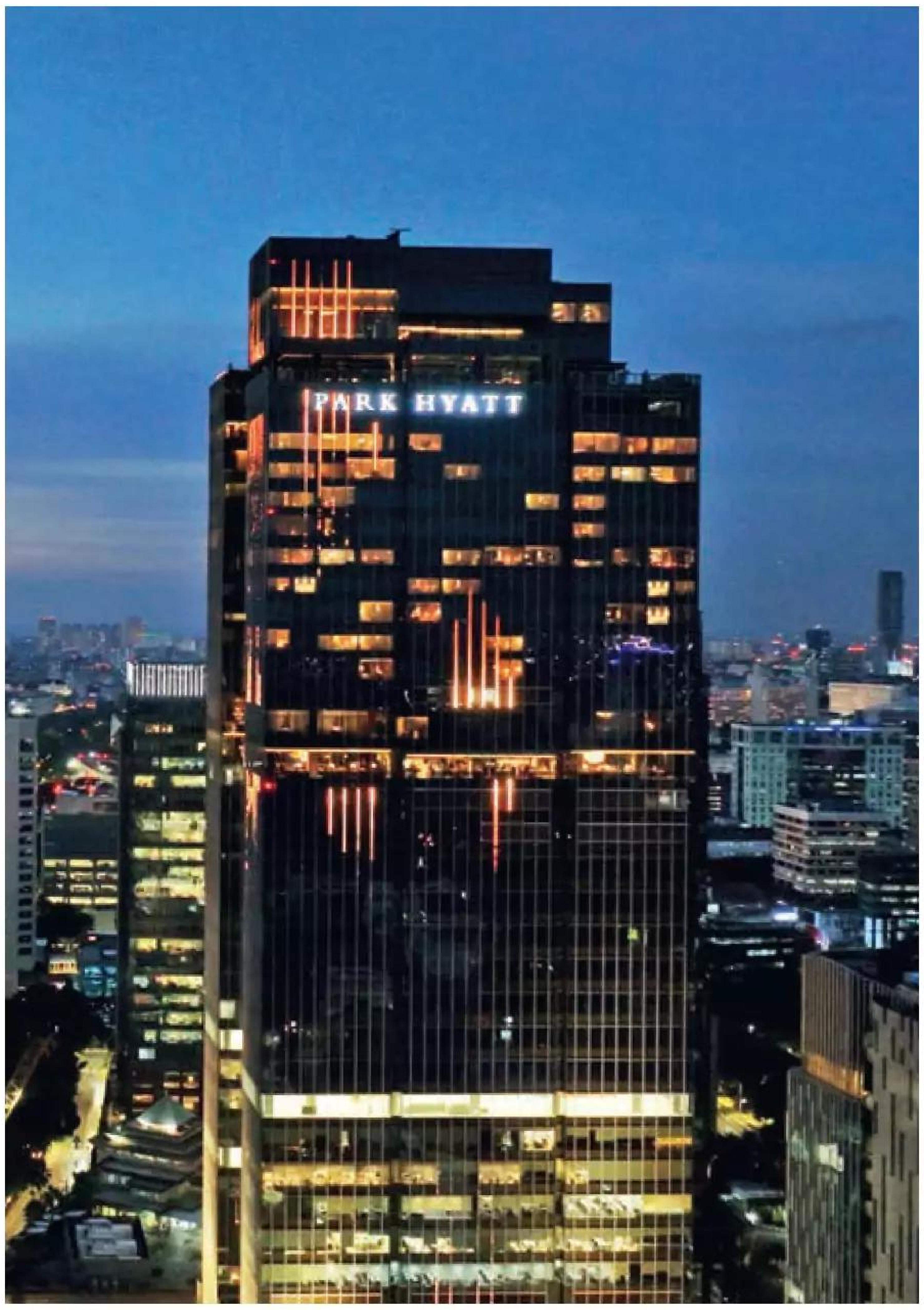
IMAGES GETTY

→ catch-ups, the city needs to support a constant influx of visitors. A range of initiatives have been put in place to achieve this.

Prioritising efficiency and safety, the KAI Commuter, branded the '"Commuterline", runs from the airport to BNI City station in downtown Central Jakarta in 48 minutes, reaching Manggarai Station in East Jakarta in six more. The fare for this service ranges from IDR25,000 to 70,000 (about US$1.5 to US$4.2) each way, with E-money cards available throughout the city. Jakarta also has an extensive Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system and a Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system in place to improve both short- and long-distance train journeys.

Whatever's on the official agenda, Indonesia's business district has had a shiny new upgrade. If you're looking for a place to host, it's here.

jakarta-tourism.go.id



PARK HYATT JAKARTA

Sky-high sophistication

If you're looking for comfort and elegance, this hotel has it in spades.

Located conveniently between the city's heritage landmarks and the vibrant Thamrin Central Business District, Park Hyatt Jakarta, is ideal for discerning bleisure travellers. 14 outdoor and indoor event spaces make for the perfect meeting place for corporate catch-ups, heartfelt celebrations, and everything in between. Plus, a state-of-the-art spa and wellness facility can help soothe your mind and body pre- or post-event.

The 220 guestrooms and suites are infused with local design elements and floor-to-ceiling windows, offering an immersive experience in vibrant Jakarta. Local, Asian, and Western cuisines are available throughout the hotel restaurants, with the option of dining in one of nine private rooms, on the Conservatory, or on the rooftop KITA Bar.

Occupying the top 19 levels of the iconic 37-storey Park Tower, this hotel overdelivers in location, views, and service.

parkhyattjakarta.com

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THE DHARMAWANGSA JAKARTA

An Indonesian oasis

Located minutes from the trendy Kemang area, this five-star stay offers an elegant escape for luxury lovers

64 rooms and 31 suites make up this esteemed property. Each is developed in the image of Java, North Java, Bali, South Sumatra or East Indonesia, using traditional fabrics for an authentic feel. The hotel's food options are equally as enticing. For fine dining, the Sriwijaya Restaurant is a must-try. This intimate venue is known for its impeccable service and exclusive reservation-only access, so be sure to book ahead so you're not disappointed. For something more casual, the Jakarta Restaurant spans Indonesian, Asian, and Western favourites. Several function rooms feature throughout the property, including the expansive Nusantara Ballroom. There's also a meeting venue and the iconic Bimasena Health Club which includes a modern fitness centre, an indoor and outdoor swimming pool, and squash and tennis courts.

the-dharmawangsa.com

THE AGENDA

Unrivalled comfort

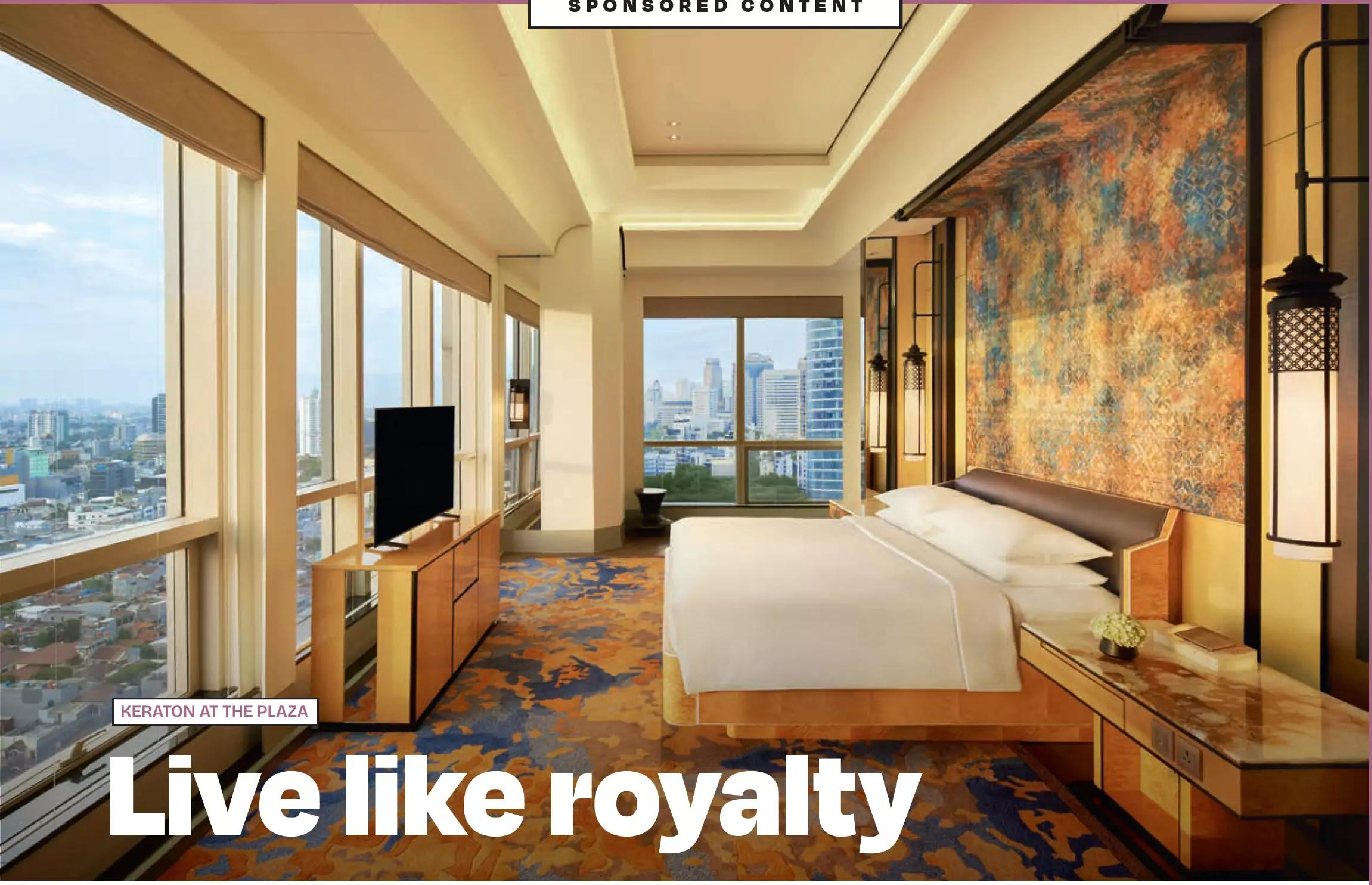
Each room enjoys a private terrace, a spacious bedroom, a large marble bathroom, and executive desks.

Impeccable service

Daily fruit baskets, printed stationary and 24-hour butler service are just a few of the treasures that await you here.

Luxury delights

The Majapahit Hall hosts the Tea Lounge, the Caviar Lounge, The Bar, and The Library, which showcases traditional instrument performances of an evening.



KERATON AT THE PLAZA

Live like royalty

Jakarta's hottest new address is exceeding expectations in hospitality

Keraton at The Plaza is Southeast Asia's first taste of The Unbound Collection by Hyatt. With an exquisite palace-inspired interior, this luxury hotel offers story-worthy stays with exclusive club access which includes complimentary breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, cocktail hours and evening canapes at The Club on level seven.

STUNNING DESIGN

Inspired by traditional Javanese palaces and set in the Plaza Indonesia complex, this hotel delivers modern luxury with an authentic Indonesian heart. Each of its 137 rooms is refined with a generous floor plan and floor-to-ceiling windows which immerse you in the capital's skyline. Every bathroom has a separate shower and bathtub, complete with an expansive double vanity.

TEMPTING LUXURIES

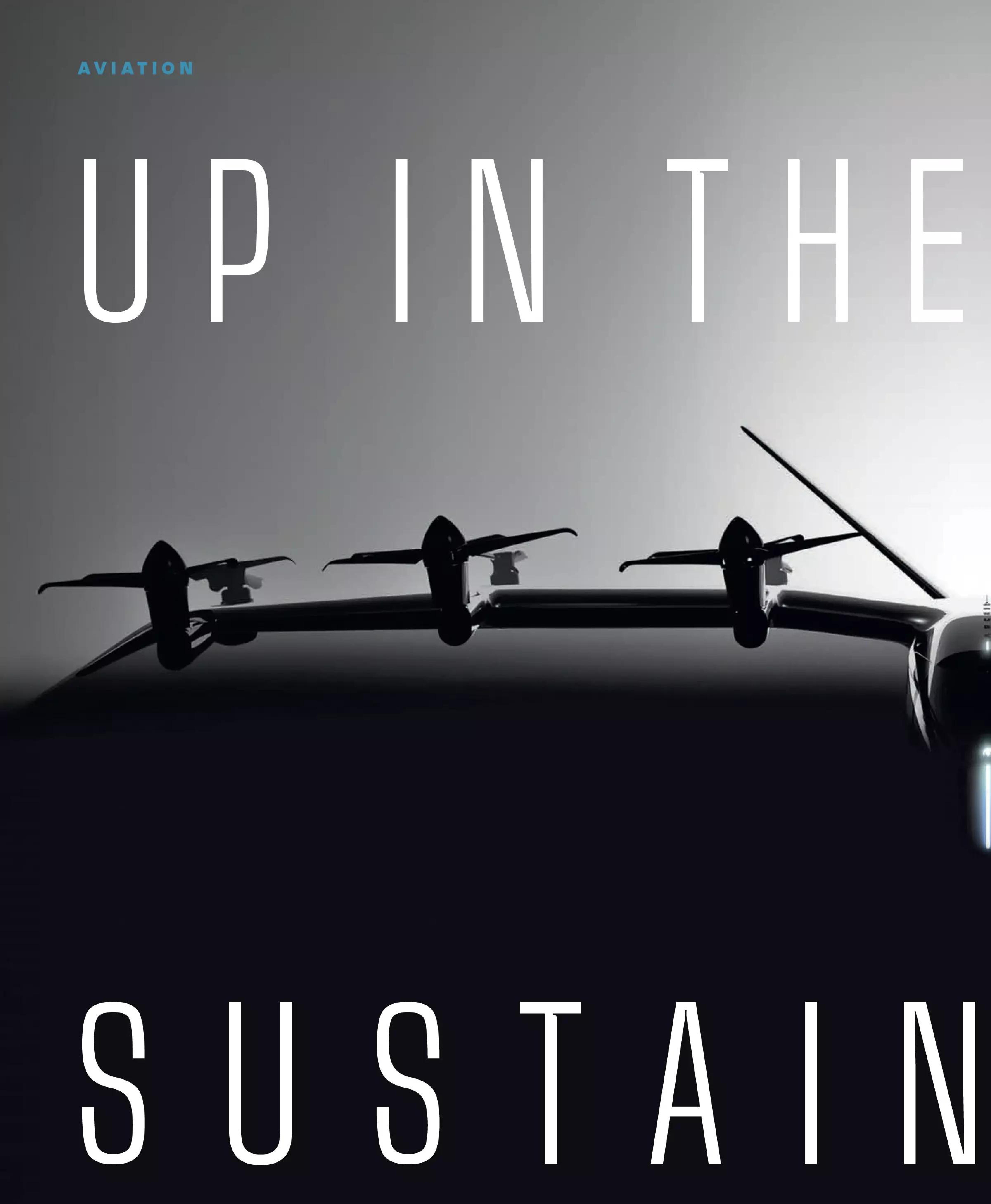
The in-house guests at the hotel enjoy privileged access to The Club. This elegant facility is made up of a private dining room, a chef's table, The Bar, and an expansive dining area that offers an à la minute menu. Walk-in guests may come and savour the culinary indulgence for a whole-day package or for breakfast, lunch or dinner only. The Club hosts daily Keraton Experiences including gamelan music performances and traditional Yogyakartan dance shows, giving you a chance to explore Indonesian culture.

SUPERIOR ENTERTAINMENT

The hotel's carpark is directly connected to Plaza Indonesia, a seven-level shopping centre packed with high-end boutiques. Plus, it's close to countless local attractions. If you prefer your home comforts, you can enjoy Grand Hyatt Jakarta's wellness facilities, including a lush Balinese garden and the Club Olympus fitness centre.

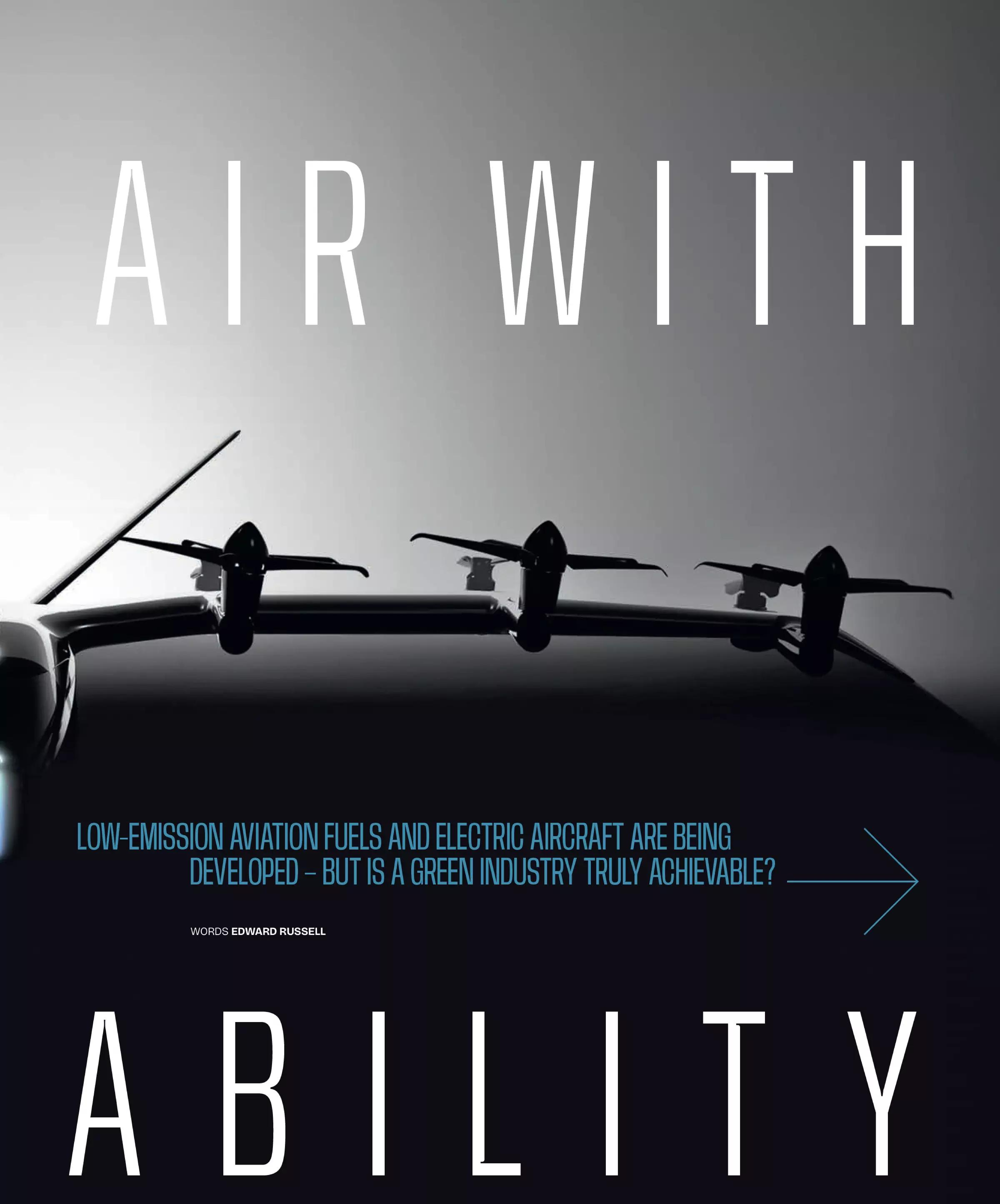
Find out more on Instagram @keraton_attheplaza or visit keratonattheplaza.com

A STORY-WORTHY STAY Get lost in your own fairytale with Javanese palace-inspired interiors



UP IN THE SUSTAIN

AIR WITH ABILITY



LOW-EMISSION AVIATION FUELS AND ELECTRIC AIRCRAFT ARE BEING DEVELOPED – BUT IS A GREEN INDUSTRY TRULY ACHIEVABLE?

WORDS **EDWARD RUSSELL**

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A380 SAF Demonstration Flight
SAF
1863
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FROM ABOVE: Emirates operated an A380 using 100% SAF in 2023; Archer Aviation Midnight eVTOL aircraft **OPENING SPREAD:** Archer Aviation Midnight

IMAGES **PREVIOUS PAGE AND BOTTOM: ARCHER AVIATION; TOP: COURTESY OF EMIRATES**

Pilots at the small Truckee Tahoe Airport in California have a unique proposition when they fuel up their planes. The only option on offer is low-emission sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF. "We're the only airport in the world to do that," said Jeff Menasco, the airport's director of aviation, in a video posted earlier this year.

Offering solely SAF is no small feat, even at a tiny general aviation airport such as Truckee Tahoe. The low-emission fuels made from elements such as used cooking oil or leftover biomass are widely seen as the most feasible way to quickly decarbonise aviation. It's just that they are extremely scarce.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that last year just 343 million gallons of SAF was produced globally, or just 0.3 per cent of jet fuel production. And while output doubled from 2023, it wasn't as much as IATA expected.

"SAF volumes are increasing but disappointingly slowly," said IATA director general Willie Walsh in December. That was before President Trump, with his pro-fossil fuel policies, took office in the US. The administration has yet to outline a policy on SAF.

And when there is scarce supply and strong demand, prices are high. At Truckee Tahoe Airport, a gallon of SAF blend – 30 per cent sustainable fuel mixed with 70 per cent Jet A – is at least US$7.22. The average price of commercial jet fuel in the US stood at approximately US$2 a gallon in early March, according to Argus data from trade group Airlines for America.

None of this is good news for global airlines that hope to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by the middle of the century. Other technologies, such as electric planes or hydrogen fuel cells, either do not have the energy density – the amount of energy stored in a given space – or are too far from maturity to meet the industry's timeline. That leaves SAF, which can be used in planes today, as the best option to significantly cut emissions soon.

SUSTAINABLE FUEL DEBATE

SAF, by definition, produces half the emissions of traditional jet fuel and often far less. Most of the fuels produced in Europe and the US generate at least 80 per cent fewer emissions.

They are not a panacea, however. SAF derived from palm oil, for example, may come from areas that have been deforested. And there are well-placed concerns that increased SAF production could pressure global food supplies.

"I can't take any of this SAF stuff seriously," said David Neeleman, CEO of Breeze Airways and founder of JetBlue, at the World Aviation Festival in October 2024. An outspoken critic of sustainable fuels, he argued the money being spent on the development of SAF could be better used decarbonising other segments of transportation. Aviation is widely acknowledged as contributing approximately 2 per cent of global carbon emissions, and transport as a whole around 20 per cent.

To the IATA boss, who joined Neeleman on stage at the festival, the criticism was too much. "If you want to stand up and say, 'I'm not going to do anything to address my environmental footprint', I wish you well," Walsh said. "As an industry, we have to recognise that there is a global movement to address environmental performance, and we have to play our part in that."

Henry Harteveldt, president of Atmosphere Research Group who moderated the panel at the festival, said both Neeleman and Walsh were correct in some

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‘We need government partnerships for research and development of SAF’

respects. Dramatically cutting personal vehicle emissions, for example, would have a much larger environmental benefit than focusing solely on aviation. “But we cannot do nothing as an industry,” he said. “This is why we need government support, partnerships and funding for research and development of SAF.”

Currently, the US is one of the few countries that has incentivised SAF production – tax incentives were included in the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. The European Union took a different approach and mandated SAF usage beginning at 2 per cent of all fuel in the bloc beginning this year, and rising to 70 per cent by 2050. The UK, meanwhile, has set out its Jet Zero strategy. In 2024, it also mandated that 2 per cent of all aviation fuel in the country must be SAF beginning this year and rising to 22 per cent by 2040. However, if an airline cannot meet these requirements, the government offers a buy-out option. A revenue-guarantee mechanism for suppliers that many believe is needed to speed up construction of new SAF production plants is expected by 2026. Though that may be too late for the previous Tory government’s commitment to have at least five SAF plants under construction in the UK by the end of 2025. International Airlines Group (IAG), owner of British Airways, has to date committed US$3.5 billion to SAF supplies in the UK and globally.

SAF SUPPLY CHALLENGES

“In the US, the markets are in a bit of a chaotic situation with the change in administration,” says Nikita Pavlenko, programme director for fuels and aviation at the International Council on Clean Transportation – a think tank that backs cutting transport emissions. The chaos affects both airlines and producers alike, with uncertainty around

→

‘We are at ground zero in starting to define and scale this marketplace’

the future of federal tax incentives as well as loan and grant programmes.

“If you’ve got proven technology, we should have access to lower cost of capital,” said Adam Klauber, vice-president of sustainability and digital supply chain at SAF producer World Energy, at a Bloomberg event in February. “It’s a really appropriate place for public funding.”

A LONG WAY FROM NET ZERO

“We are at ground zero in starting to define and scale this marketplace,” said Lauren Riley, chief sustainability officer at United, at the Bloomberg event. And she’s right. Global SAF usage is still minimal, amounting to little more than a rounding error.

There is not a single electric aircraft in commercial service globally. And hydrogen fuel cell technology is decades away from the energy densities needed to power commercial planes such as the Airbus A320 or Boeing 737.

IATA expects SAF production to double this year to approximately 713 million gallons. One driver is the opening of new production facilities. If SAF production continues to double annually, production of the fuels would meet or exceed that of jet fuel a few years before the airline industry’s 2050 net-zero target. But it is not expected to double indefinitely – at some point, the world will run out of used cooking oil and disused biomass. Synthetic sources, for example “green” hydrogen, will need to be developed.

That, however, requires determination, grit and a lot of patience to come to fruition – things that, at least in the US, appear in short supply when it comes to green tech. Just look at Southwest Airlines’ decision to lay off the majority of its sustainability team in February.

“Sustainability has taken a back seat,” says Shashank Nigam, founder and CEO of aviation advisor SimpliFlying and co-author of the book *Sustainability in the Air*. “It’s the companies that are able to adapt to be energy-resilient, energy-dominant that will succeed.” **BT**

ELECTRIC AVIATION

Many have their eye on the rapid emergence of electric aircraft, notably electric vertical take-off and landing – or eVTOL – planes, as a symbol of the industry’s greener future. These battery-powered craft made by companies such as Archer Aviation and Joby Aviation could begin carrying passengers in places such as Dubai and New York City in the next few years.

But few in the industry expect the electric planes in development today to make a meaningful difference toward reducing emissions. The aircraft are too small – most seat just four passengers – and cannot fly far enough to alter existing travel patterns. “It’ll be like a bicycle with training wheels – it’s what you will learn on,” says Henry Harteveldt. The first generation of eVTOLs will likely serve niche markets. Delta has already said one of the first markets for its eVTOLs from Joby will be Manhattan to New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK). The craft will replace fossil-fuel-powered helicopters on the Manhattan-JFK route.

UNITED
THE FUTURE IS SAF

FROM ABOVE: Cabin of the Archer Aviation Midnight eVTOL aircraft; United Airlines purchased the most SAF of any US airline in 2023

IMAGES TOP: ARCHER AVIATION; BOTTOM: UNITED

M

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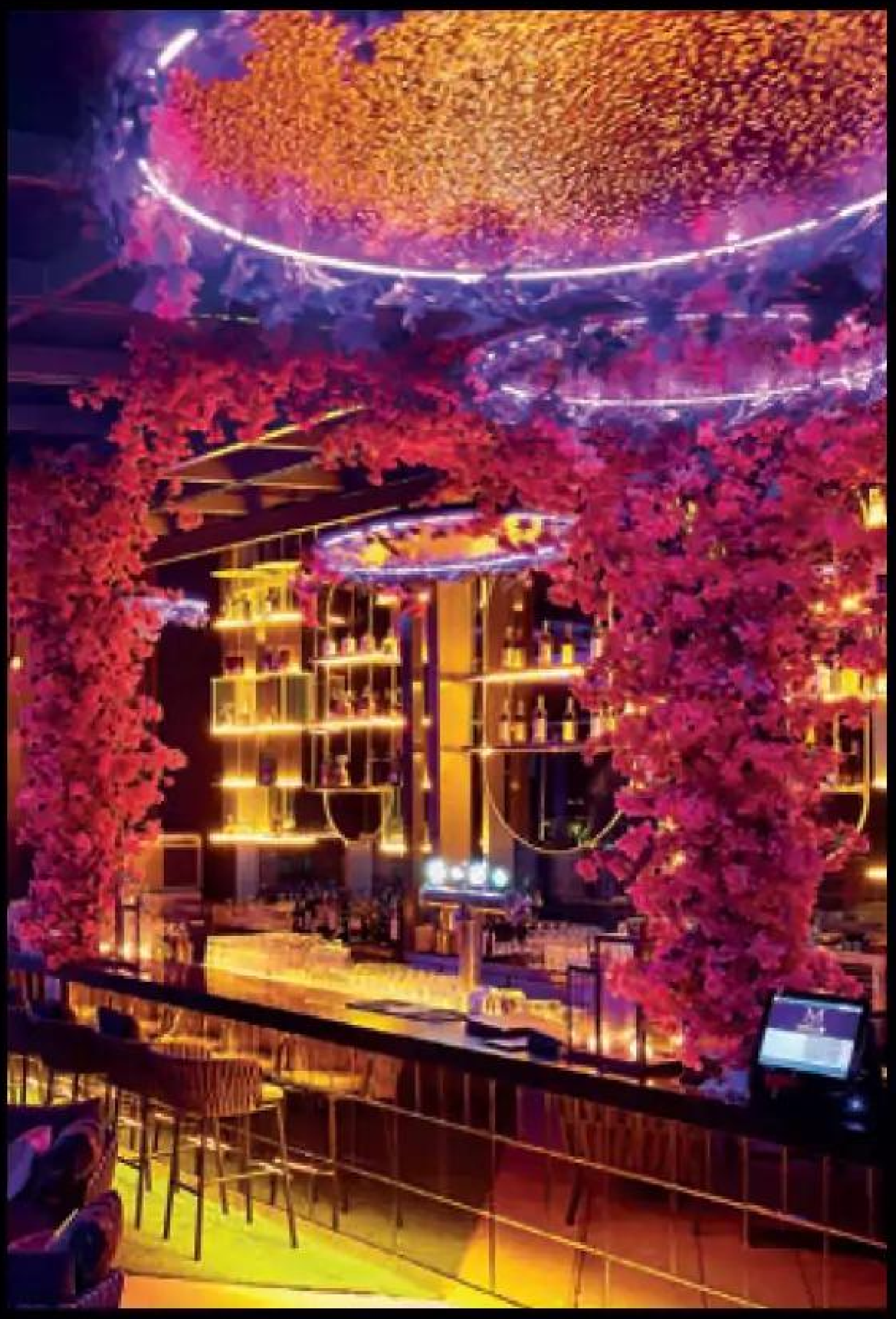

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REMOTE

AFTER THE PANDEMIC, BOSSES AROUND THE GLOBE ARE PONDERING THIS QUESTION:
DOES WORKING FROM HOME WORK?

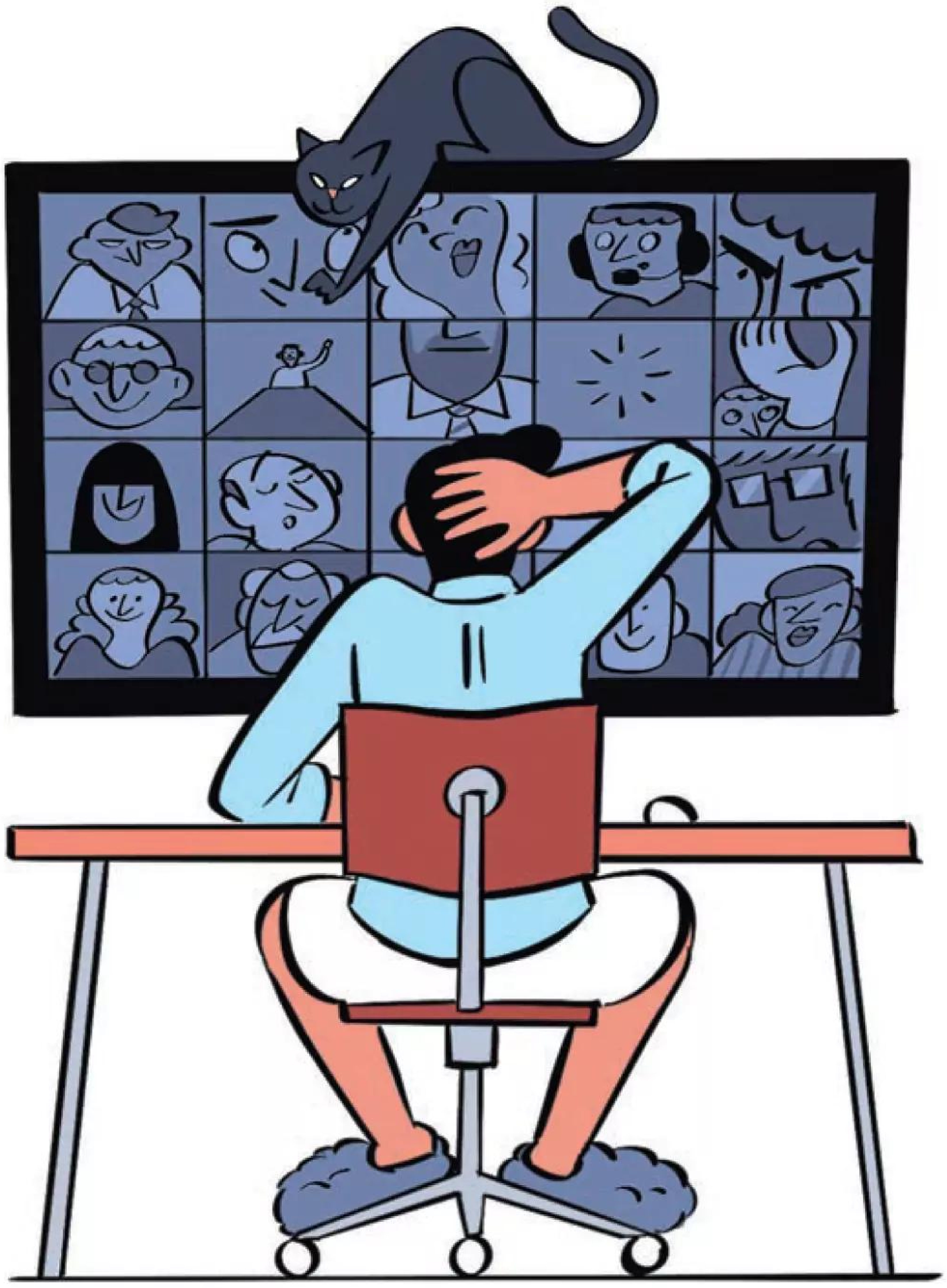
STORY BY **RICHARD LORD**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ANTONIO SORTINO**

CONTROL

There have been some, shall we say, *colourful* contributions to the ongoing debate regarding remote work, revealing some rather entrenched views. Here, for example, is JPMorgan Chase chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon at a recent town hall event in the States, in response to a petition signed by 950 company staff requesting more flexible working arrangements.

"Don't give me this s**t that work-from-home-Friday works. I call a lot of people on Fridays and there's not a goddamn person you can get hold of. It simply doesn't work. It doesn't work for creativity. It slows down decision-making. I've had it with this kind of stuff. I don't care how many people sign that f***ing petition."

The issue of flexible work, then, continues to be highly contested territory. Not so much a question of WFH as "WTF?" Employees, broadly speaking, like it, although there are exceptions. Among employers, the picture is far more mixed, with a lot of companies recently mandating a return to the office. Everyone is trying to work out what the future of flexible working looks like, with the key question being: does work from home work?



WFH GOES MAINSTREAM

Remote work wasn't really much of a thing until roughly half a century ago, when emerging technologies started to make it more feasible. Clearly, though, what really made it a mainstream option was the Covid-19 pandemic, when it became a widespread necessity. For many, that period was an epiphany, as dire predictions of staff slacking off largely failed to come true, and many people realised they liked the flexibility.

Consultancy Mercer's latest *Global Talent Trends* report found that 71 per cent of employees say remote work has improved their work-life balance, 57 per cent feel it allows them to concentrate better, 62 per cent feel more productive and 70 per cent report lower stress levels.

"Additionally, many employees [60 per cent] feel a stronger sense of belonging to their organisation while working from home," says Gary Chin, rewards leader for Mercer Hong Kong. "Overall, the findings suggest that working from home has led to favourable outcomes for many employees, highlighting the importance of flexible work arrangements in enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity."

That's certainly true for Susan Wallis, a technology director based in the United Kingdom for a global bank that allows employees to work from home two or three days a week.

'There's no black-and-white answer, but WFH is a lever you can pull'

"You get more time for yourself; get to spend more time with family and are there for your children; have no commute; get more sleep due to less early starts in the mornings; and reduce your costs for eating and drinking during the day, and for commuting," she says.

There can be benefits for companies, too: for example, remote work can help to produce a happier, more motivated workforce; allows them to employ people who don't live so close to the office; and provides sustainability benefits by cutting out commuting.

"Is it a good or a bad thing for the enterprise? There's no black-and-white answer," says John Hazan, global talent solutions lead for consultancy Bain. "But it's a new lever you can pull. Certainly when you ask employees about what motivates them at work, flexibility is in the top three. Think of all the levers you can pull in terms of flexibility – it can be about when, where and how to work."

OUT OF OFFICE, OUT OF SIGHT

When it comes to productivity, the picture is unclear, with plenty of studies suggesting both positive and negative effects. Scepticism from employers tends to focus on the lags in communication remote work can cause, plus the lack of physical interaction with colleagues, potentially hampering the sort of serendipitous creative inspiration that can happen when people are in the same room and can spark off each other.

Ada To, vice-president of human resources at Hong Kong hospitality company Wharf Hotels, comments: "Working from home offers benefits such as increased flexibility and reduced overhead costs. However, it can also result in feelings of isolation, as well as communication difficulties, which may complicate collaboration."

Bain's Hazan, though, is resistant to the idea that remote working necessarily involves a loss of cultural cohesion. "We have friends and family that we get along with – are we checking on them every day?" he says. "There is much more to a culture than just meeting a person face-to-face every day. It's more important to be together intentionally at limited times. When you ask people to be in the office, make sure it's for a good reason – because they need to be there, not because you just want them to."

For many companies, this is as much a cultural decision, one based on their instinctive beliefs about the best way of working, as an empirical one. The issue of trust looms large – do organisations trust their employees to work effectively if no one is physically overseeing them? One answer is to focus the company's evaluation of that issue on what employees achieve rather than what they put in – in management-speak, their outputs rather than their inputs – which, let's face it, they probably should be doing anyway.

Says Murray Sarelius, KPMG's regional lead for Global Mobility Services in Asia-Pacific, "Whether companies are supportive or less in favour of working from home appears to be based on a mix of evidence and instinctive feelings. Many organisations track employee sentiment, including about flexible working, but the final decision may be heavily influenced by the personal preference of senior leaders within the organisation."

For Bain's Hazan, making remote work successful requires a change of emphasis from management: "The key issue is alignment of leadership on the benefits of hybrid work. They need to fully believe in this and give freedom to front-line managers to make it work on the ground. It needs a different culture from front-line managers. They need to be even more benevolent and open to team members, and much clearer on their expectations."

This is very much the way financial services company DBS Bank Hong Kong manages its teams, for example, allowing them to work remotely up to 40 per cent of the time – 100 per cent for new parents and caregivers – and judging their outputs.

"We empower our employees to choose whether working from home or working at any of our offices fits their activities on a particular day," says Betty Lam, head of human resources, Hong Kong, for the bank. "Managers are empowered to manage the hybrid work arrangements of their teams. We have established robust performance and development practices to ensure employees are fairly evaluated and rewarded based on their deliverables, against performance goals, regardless of their working location."

WORKING BY NUMBERS

60%

of the global workforce now works remotely at least part of the time

DENMARK

is seen as the best country for remote work

20-24

year olds (globally) are least likely to apply for remote roles

60%

cite no commuting as a top benefit

CANADA

has an average of 1.7 paid full days a week WFH. For China, it's 0.8

SOURCES: GLOBAL SURVEY OF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM.

VALUE PROPOSITION

Of course, not everyone even wants to work from home. For some, it can be socially isolating; for others, a cramped and crowded apartment – often the case in places such as Hong Kong – can make for a challenging workplace. Then there are demographic and geographical variations. On average, women tend to value it more, perhaps reflecting that in many societies, they are still expected to take on disproportionate childcare and other domestic responsibilities. Asia works from home less than Europe and a lot less than the US, averaging under a day a week, and people in the region are also less enthusiastic about the prospect; across many parts of the continent, in-person presence has long been prized as a visible manifestation of cohesion and respect.

Nonetheless, remote work is becoming a critical component of the ways companies attract and retain staff, and is likely to become commoditised and part of their value proposition.

David Mayes, principal, Global Mobility Services for KPMG in the US, believes this could reflect the relative strength of a company's position.

"Where organisations are broadly being successful and talent management procedures are driving a strong pipeline of key talent, there is negligible pressure to make any fundamental shifts around the culture of remote working," he says. "Where organisations are facing economic headwinds or aren't finding talent with the right skills available in succession plans, then remote working is a relatively low-cost lever to pull in order to disrupt current ways of working and create a real or perceived shift in culture."

There's even the prospect of differential compensation, with a premium paid to those who are physically present. In Mercer's *Global Talent Trends* report, 37 per cent of respondents said they would be willing to give up 10 per cent of their salary for the ability to work flexible hours. One thing's for sure: remote work isn't going away. **BT**

A PERFECT TRIO

Three Australian cities offer different takes on work and play

WORDS CARMEN JENNER

Business travel frequently plunges you into a destination with a short amount of time to look around. But you've come all this way, so why not make the most of the journey? We've prepared a round-up of our favourite spots in Sydney, Perth and Melbourne, if you find yourself with time to spare in these dynamic state capital cities. Chances are you'll be in town for work, so we've also listed the main MICE facilities in each.

SYDNEY

The darling of New South Wales continues to dazzle and entertain

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES; HOTEL WOOLSTORE 1888, SYDNEY

Visit

You haven't really been to Sydney if you haven't strolled around Darling Harbour for a glimpse of the **Sydney Harbour Bridge** or the **Sydney Opera House**. Or take it one step further and climb the bridge, catch a performance at the opera house or stroll through the **Chinese Garden of Friendship**. The nearby **Rocks** is a lively precinct full of history, embedded in the cobblestone lanes lined with shops and cafes in heritage buildings, plus wonderful bridge views.

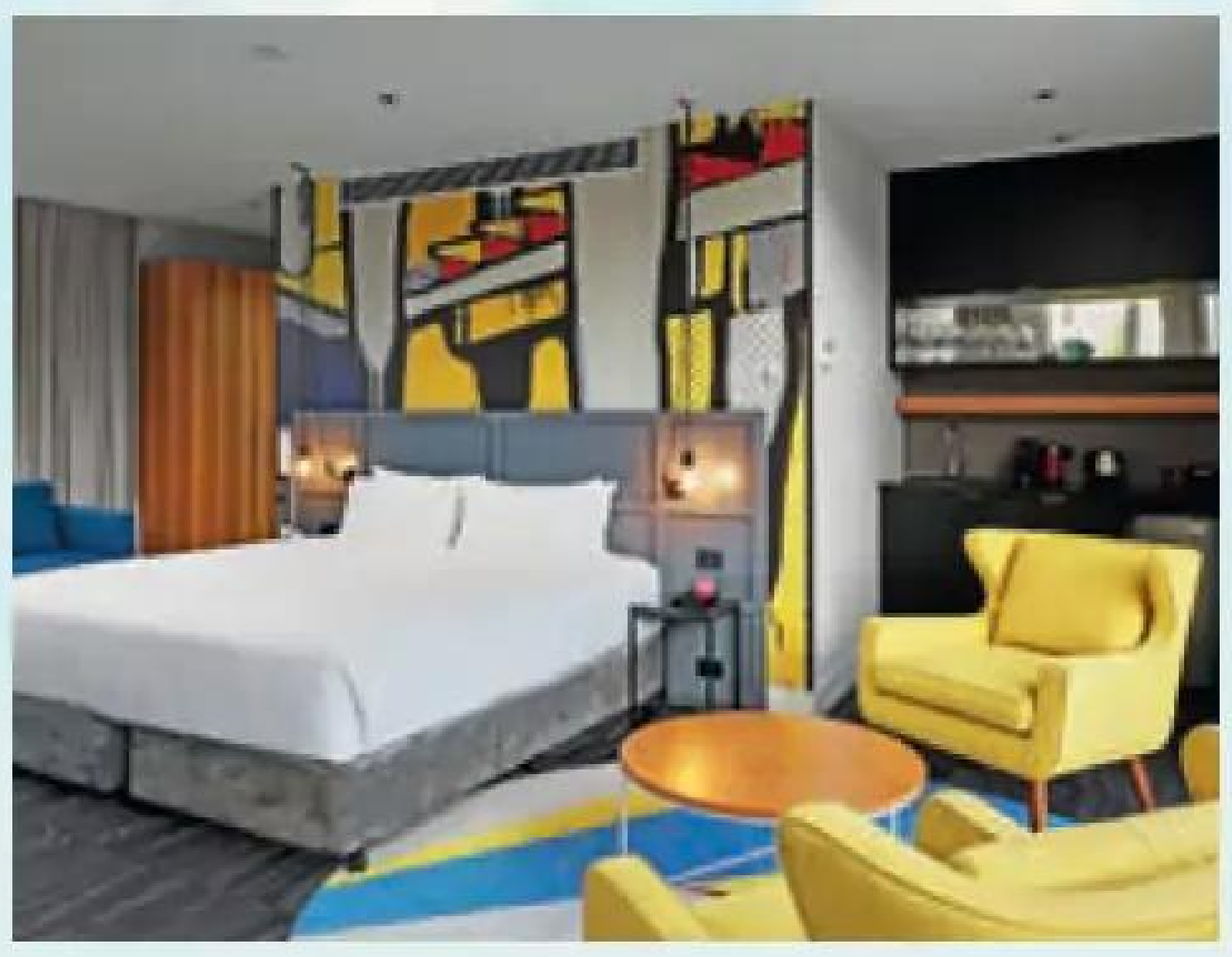
Even if shopping isn't your bag, the Romanesque architecture of the **Queen Victoria Building**, built in 1898, will transport you back to another era. If you have a fear of heights, the skywalk at the **Sydney Tower Eye** probably isn't for you, but you can still enjoy the panoramic views from the top without the breeze.

Eat

Aria's tasting menus and spectacular harbour views have earned its status as one of the best waterfront restaurants in the country. Meanwhile, **Firedoor** in Surry Hills lives up to its name, where diners witness their dishes being cooked over exposed flames, thanks to the open kitchen, which cooks without the use of electricity or gas. Oxford Street's food and nightlife scene is as lively as ever, even when the annual Mardi Gras Parade isn't embellishing the neighbourhood with colour. For low-key dining, **Spice Alley** in the Chippendale area cooks up tasty fare from its cluster of Southeast Asian street-side eateries.

Stay

Falling under Accor's signature Handwritten Collection, the **Hotel Woolstore 1888, Sydney** (below) presents bespoke design within this heritage landmark hotel. The stylish **Four Points by Sheraton Sydney, Central Park** offers convenience from this central location within walking distance of Chinatown and Spice Alley. Drawing inspiration from its harbourside location, the **W Hotel Sydney** exudes a sense of place and luxury reflective of this vibrant city.



EVENTS

Situated in Darling Harbour, the landmark International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC) offers the Grand and Parkside ballrooms, an Exhibition Centre and the ICC Sydney Theatre, which seats up to 9,000. For great harbour views, the Four Seasons Hotel Sydney caters to a range of events in the height of luxury, and includes the 1,675 sqm Grand Ballroom. The Accor Stadium features multiple indoor rooms, including the Millennium Room (which accommodates up to 1,500 guests), as well as outdoor spaces on the playing field, which has the world's largest video screen, at 120m in length.

WHERE ELSE?
Sydney is justifiably famous as one of the world's great cities

PERTH

Western Australia's capital offers a wide range of attractions – and some marvellous dining

Visit

If you do nothing else while in Perth, head to the **Elizabeth Quay** entertainment precinct to admire the commanding skyline from the curved bridge hovering over the Swan River, or from a cruise with the Little Ferry Co. Then head into the heart of the metropolis with a stroll through the city's malls and arcades, especially the **Tudor-style London Court**.

Spanning more than 400 hectares of botanical gardens and forests, **Kings Park** is one of the largest inner-city parks in the world and boasts panoramic city and river views from several lookouts, including the Lotterywest Federation Walkway. Western Australia is famed for its pristine beaches, with **Cottesloe Beach** being a local favourite due to its shady Norfolk pines and silky sand. You'll be primed for spectacular sunsets while on the coast, plus you're close to the Mediterranean vibes and Bathers Beach of the historic port town of **Fremantle**.

WESTERN FLAVOURS Hearth, at the Ritz-Carlton, Perth

Eat

The city has many notable fine dining options specialising in Western Australian flavours, including **Hearth** at the Ritz-Carlton, Perth, located at Elizabeth Quay, and the high-end Indigenous-inspired menu at **Wildflower**, perched on the rooftop of the swanky Como, The Treasury Hotel. Equally fancy, **Fleur** serves French-inspired cuisine from the ground floor of the heritage-listed Royal Hotel. If Japanese fare is in order, the inconspicuous **Ginza Nana Alley** is home to several eateries serving regional classics, such as Onomichi ramen (from Hiroshima), tonkatsu, and Japanese whiskies. On the opposite side of the railway from the CBD, Northbridge attracts locals from far and wide for the arty offerings in the **Perth Cultural Centre**. The area is also known for offering dishes from around the world, particularly in Chinatown, with its gritty late-night bar scene.

Stay

The elegant **Parmelia Hilton Perth** and the **DoubleTree by Hilton Perth Waterfront** are conveniently around the corner from the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. The **Pan Pacific Perth** has undergone a refurbishment of its rooms, suites and convention facilities, and boasts the city's finest Peruvian restaurant, **Uma**. The **Intercontinental Perth** is situated opposite His Majesty's Theatre and a short walk away from Northbridge if you're planning on a cultural fix.

COME ON IN Cottesloe Beach beckons

EVENTS

The Pan Pacific Perth's refurbished Grand River Ballroom boasts expansive river views and caters for up to 600 guests (the Golden Ballroom holds up to 710 guests). Crown Perth's entertainment complex features multiple hotels, restaurants, a casino, a theatre and a range of event spaces, including The Astral, which offers versatile catering for 550 to 1,000 guests; the Crown Ballroom for up to 1,500 guests; and the exclusive Crystal Club with sweeping river and city views. The purpose-built Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre features high-tech exhibition halls, with adjoining ballrooms that can accommodate up to 2,200 guests, as well as the Riverside Theatre, which seats up to 2,500.

IMAGES GETTY IMAGES; THE RITZ-CARLTON, PERTH

MELBOURNE

Explore Australia's fashion, food and sporting capital

Visit

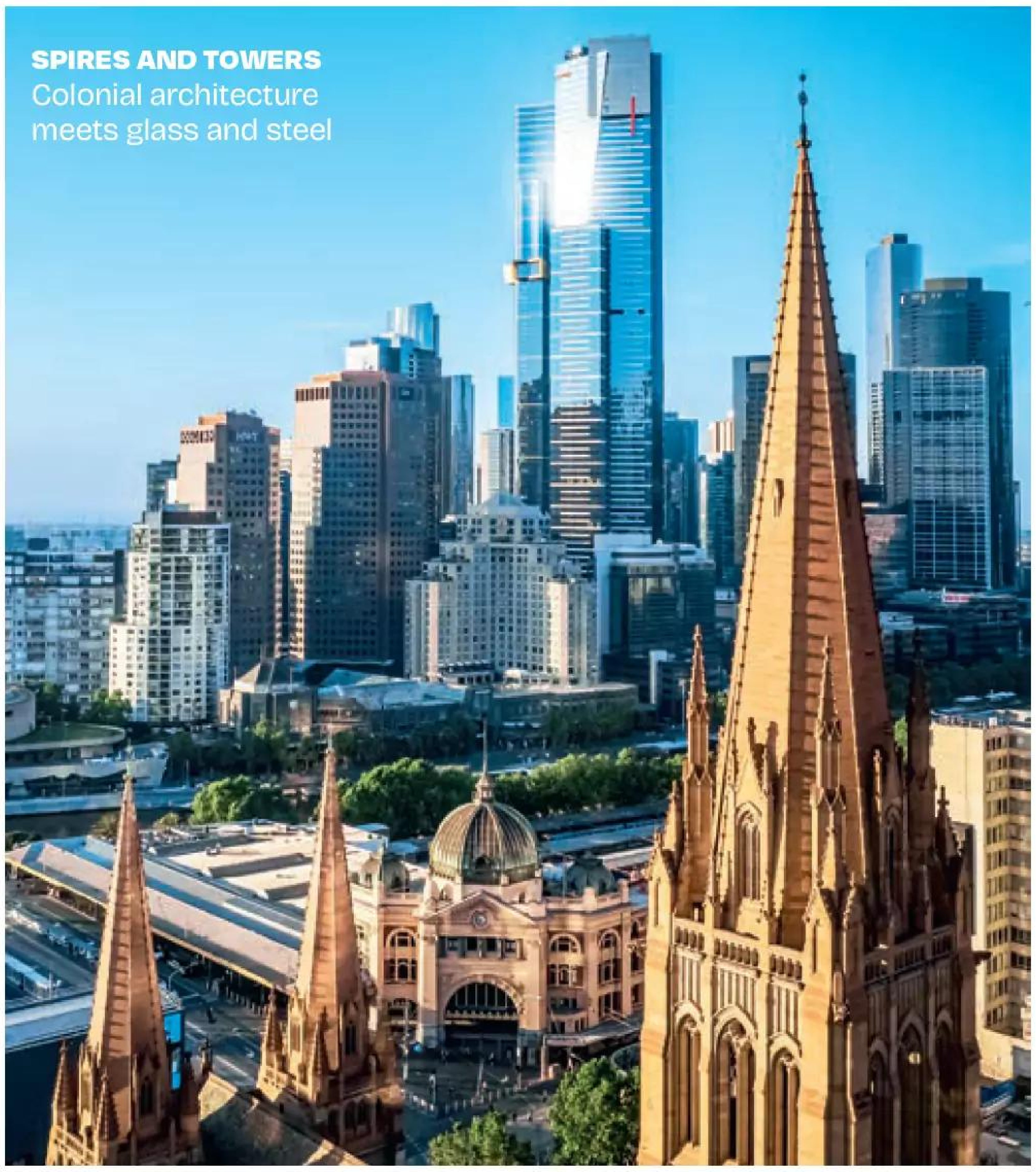
Known as the fashion capital of Australia, Melbourne's bespoke boutiques are often found within the city's heritage alleyways and arcades, including **The Strand** Melbourne, the **Royal Arcade** Melbourne and **Flinders Lane**, while just north of the CBD, the Melbourne Central Shopping Centre spans two blocks. The **Queen Victoria Market** is a hive of activity on weekends, and the fresh food produce section is worth a wander. A few minutes out of the city in affluent South Yarra, Chapel Street and Toorak Road have miles of high-street and exclusive boutiques.

Melbourne is also famous for its sports scene. In case you haven't timed your visit with an AFL (Australian Football League) or cricket match, sports fans will revel in a tour of the **Melbourne Cricket Ground** (MCG) and its **Australian Sports Museum**.

Eat

Melbourne's cafe culture originated in Little Italy, on Lygon Street, following the influx of Italian immigrants in the 1950s. Old-school Italian dining establishments continue to run alongside **Jimmy Watson's Restaurant and Wine Bar**, believed to be the first of its kind in the country. Melbourne's **Chinatown** dates back to the gold rush of the 1850s, and is still the place to hunt for the best steamed dumplings.

You'll discover many of Melbourne's eclectic bars behind clandestine entrances in the city's back alleys adorned with edgy street art. A themed bar-hop might include **Alcotraz** (the bar behind bars) and the Viking-inspired **Mjólner**, unless you prefer something such as the moody **Aster Bar** or the **Beneath Driver Lane** blues bar.



SPIRES AND TOWERS
Colonial architecture meets glass and steel

STIR-CRAZY
A highly immersive experience at Alcotraz

Stay

The elegant **Le Méridien Melbourne**, situated in the West End of Burke Street, seamlessly blends its ornate art deco facade with chic mid-century interiors. Located in the South Wharf precinct, the **Pan Pacific** Melbourne offers sweeping Yarra River views from floor-to-ceiling windows. Nearby, the **Novotel South Wharf Hotel** provides easy access to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. **BT**

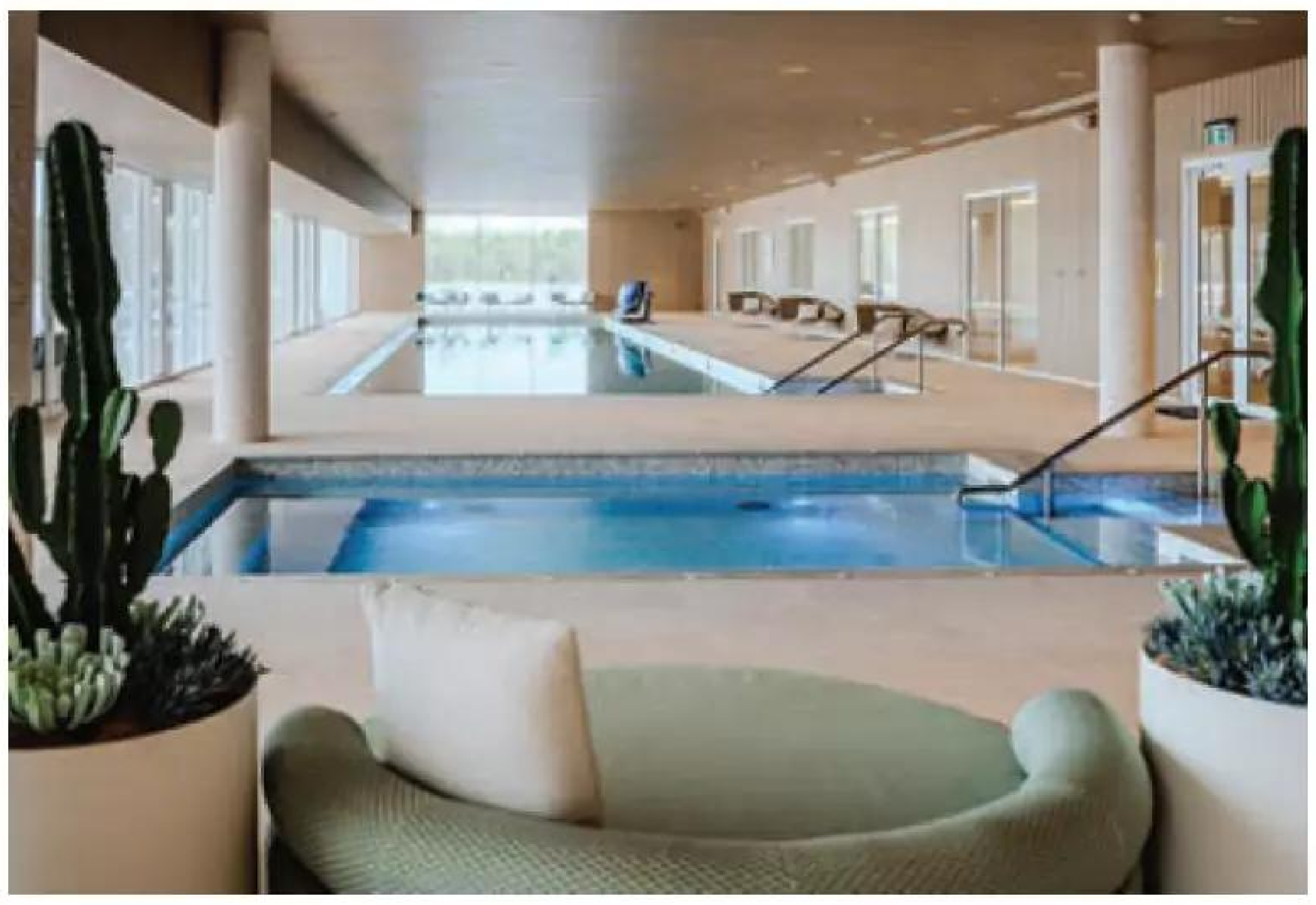
EVENTS

Crown Melbourne boasts an impressive portfolio of venue spaces, including a conference centre that accommodates up to 840 delegates, as well as the rooftop Crown Aviary, with a stunning city skyline backdrop. The MCG, meanwhile, is more than just a stadium, featuring a range of field-side corporate spaces named after sporting legends. The Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre caters for gala events for up to 2,000 guests, theatre seating in the Plenary and the versatile Goldfields Event Space for bespoke or large-scale events.

MICE AND EASY DOES IT
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

IMAGES FEVER; STEWART DONN; VISIT VICTORIA

PALM LAKE
RESORT
PELICAN — WATERS



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AIRLINE REVIEW
Lufthansa Allegris First Class

LOUNGE REVIEW
Delta One Lounge, Los Angeles

HOTEL REVIEW
Mondrian, Hong Kong

HOTEL REVIEW
Grand Hyatt, Seoul

Review

Putting business travel to the test

FLIGHT REVIEW

Cathay Pacific Boeing 777-300ER Aria Suite

We trial Cathay's new business class product, now flying daily between Hong Kong and London

Boarding

Cathay operates from London Heathrow's Terminal 3, which has some of the airport's best lounges. Check-in was a breeze in Zone C, with clear signage and lots of desks, meaning there was no queue. Although there were construction works, it was easy to navigate our way upstairs and through Fast Track, which now operates without the need to take any liquids or laptops out of bags.

From Fast Track, it was a short hop to the Cathay lounge. It's one of my favourite lounges, with large picture windows, a noodle bar, spacious seating zones and showers with Bamford toiletries. If your Oneworld status permits, you'll also be able to access Cathay's first class lounge, which features a more intimate space, top shelf drinks (with no less than three Champagnes) and an à la carte restaurant with healthy fare and Hong Kong favourites – from noodle soups to fried rice.

It seemed a little ostentatious to take the airline's buggy to the nearby gate, but I was short on time so it felt rude to say no to the friendly driver.

The seat

The Aria Suite rings in a new chapter for Cathay, which seeks to expand on its lifestyle brand ambition. On entering the cabin you are greeted by an interior that is warmly familiar yet, at the same time, resembles a hotel room in the sky.

Bulkheads are adorned with fabric walls and black wooden slatted sections break up the galleys – there are even nature-inspired artworks in the front galley, acting as a sky-high art gallery.

The cabin is still split into two, with the reconfigured 777-300ERs boasting 45 suites configured in a 1-2-1 layout. The airline has taken well-liked elements from its existing product and added custom details for this new business class product. The lie-flat woollen seats now feature privacy doors, intuitive storage units in light wooden veneer, wireless charging and soft, woven and tactile finishes that would be more familiar in The White Company shop than on board an aircraft.

Each seat has a 24-inch 4K screen with an all-new smart TV interface – think next-generation moving maps, live lavatory status and a great entertainment library.

Beside the seat is charging aplenty, private stowage with in-seat mirrors, myriad lighting scenes (customisable by a touchscreen seat control) and, of course, amenities and plush bedding by UK brand Bamford.

The flight

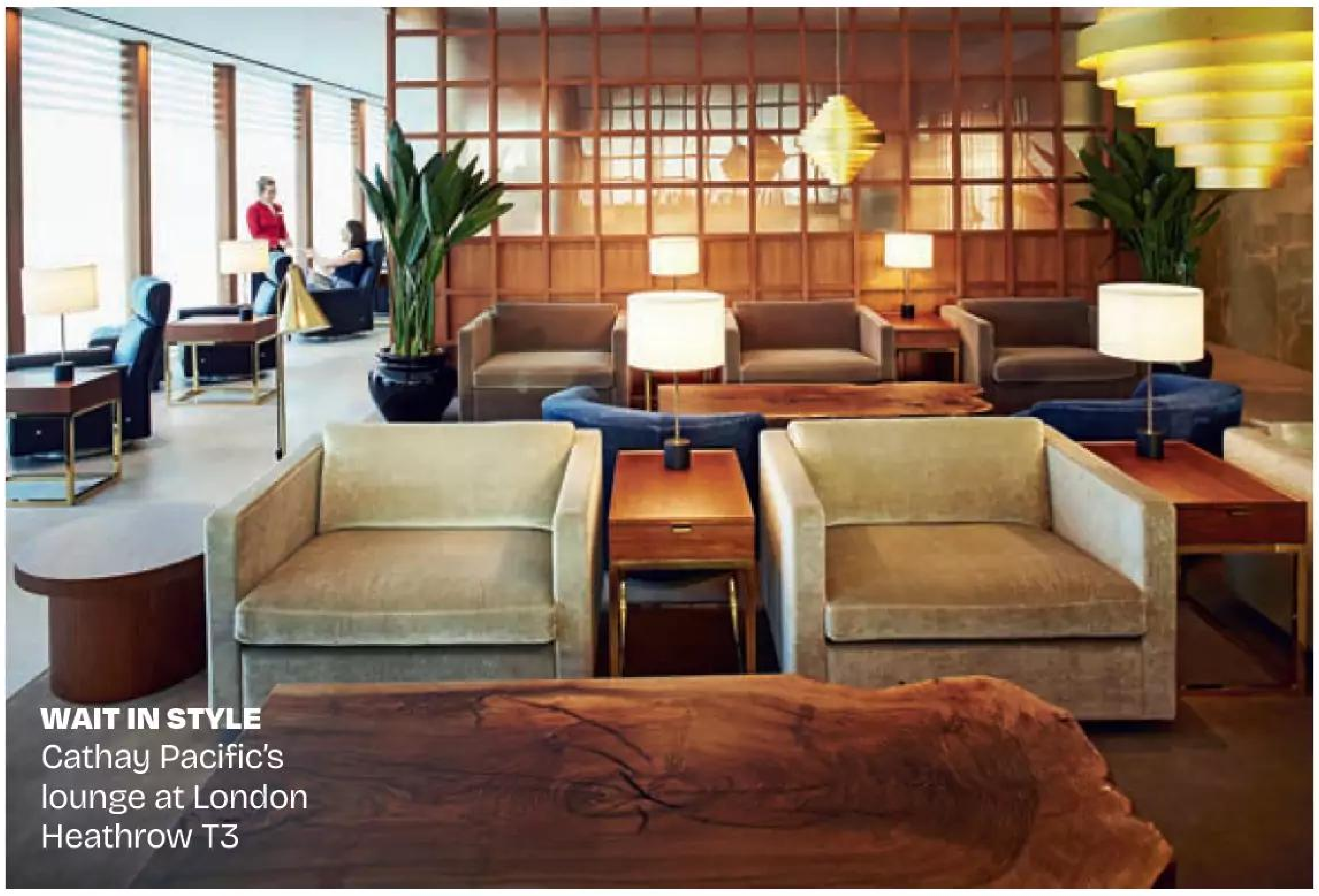
Cathay's crew have a slight tongue-in-cheek laissez-faire approach to

CHIC SURROUNDS
Privacy, space and soft fabrics make for a smooth flight

> 'It rings in a new chapter for Cathay, which seeks to expand on its lifestyle brand ambition'

GOOD-TO-KNOW

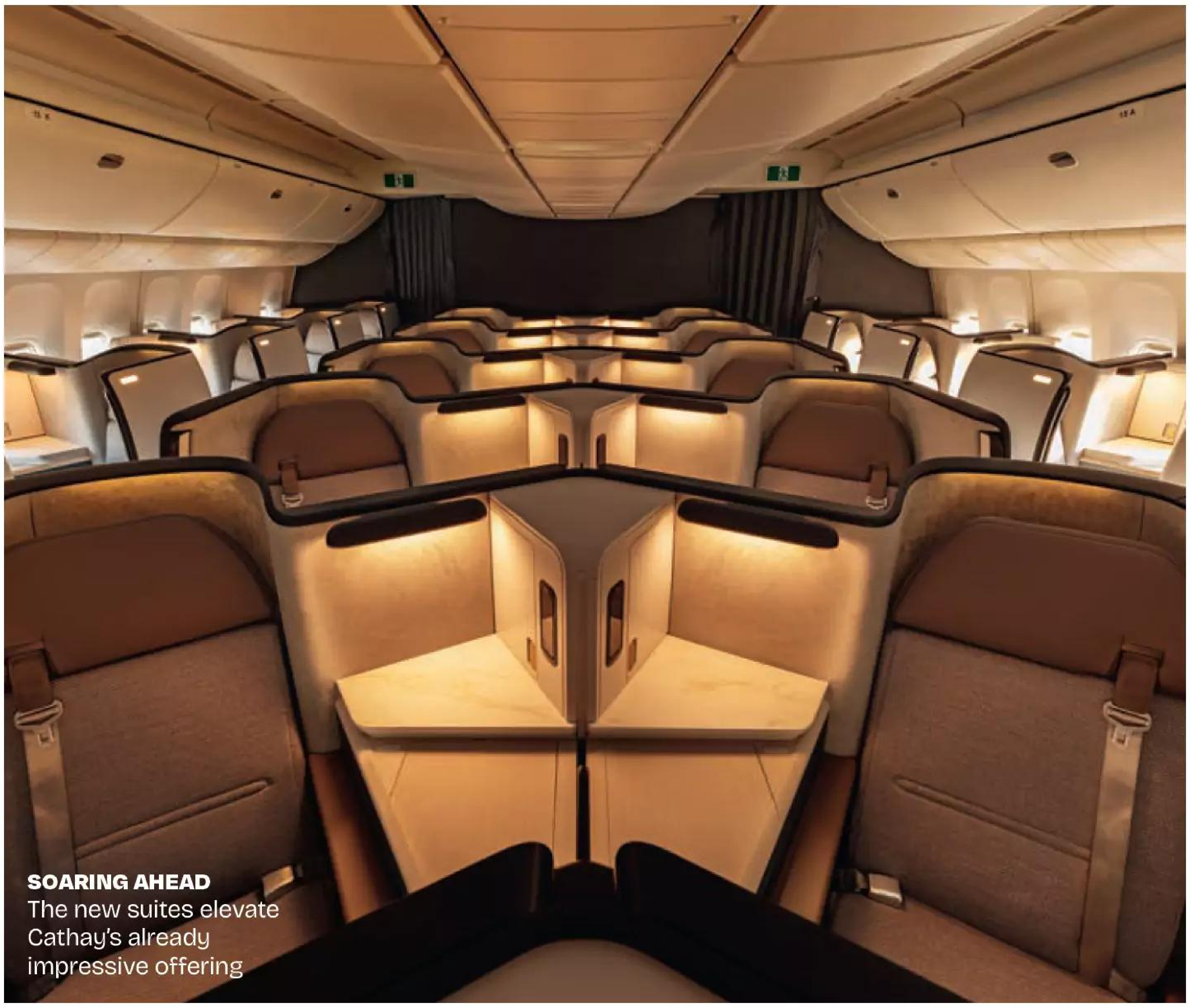
The Aria Suite is progressively being rolled out, but CX250 and CX255 are most likely to have these new suites. Additional services will come online in the near future.



WAIT IN STYLE
Cathay Pacific's lounge at London Heathrow T3

WORDS
JONNY CLARK

‘You are greeted by an interior that is warmly familiar yet resembles a hotel room in the sky’


SOARING AHEAD
The new suites elevate Cathay’s already impressive offering

FINE DINING
Food options are plentiful and delicious

IMAGES **COURTESY OF CATHAY PACIFIC; JONNY CLARK**

service, marrying professionalism with dry wit, making the flight memorable for all the right reasons.

When it comes to inflight dining, you’re able to pre-book dishes, though there are plenty of options on board even without the extensive pre-check-in menu. After take-off, we were offered an amuse-bouche of roast beef and asparagus. This was followed by a smoked salmon and avocado starter, and stunning wok-fried cod with steamed rice and dried pear and pork shin soup. Pre-sleep, I opted for the matcha cheesecake and a cheese plate, before finishing the meal with a praline chocolate and green tea. For those wanting to burn the midnight oil, there are dine-anytime options.

Instead, I set up the seat for sleep after dinner. While the bedding and seat were comfortable, I found it to be a little stuffy since there are no personal air vents. This was easily resolved by removing the blanket, but the balance could be better managed by altering the tog of the duvet. While the doors add privacy, they also cocoon the passenger, limiting airflow compared to the rest of the cabin. That said, I still managed to get a healthy seven-hour sleep.

Breakfast was served before arrival and constituted of no less than five options, separated by cuisine rather than dish – wellness, lighter, Chinese, Western and express.

Arrival

As I’ve always experienced, arrival into Hong Kong was on time and afforded incredible views. While I was hoping for a stand closer to immigration, the gate at the end of the terminal meant for a shorter taxi, and thanks to the terminal train and lack of queues at immigration, I was out of the airport 30 minutes after landing. That’s no mean feat. **BT**

VERDICT

Cathay’s brand-new suite isn’t a revolution, but a welcome evolution of an already impressive cabin interior. The technology is flawless, the seat is gloriously residential and the cabin evokes a smart private members’ club above that of an aircraft cabin.

BEST FOR

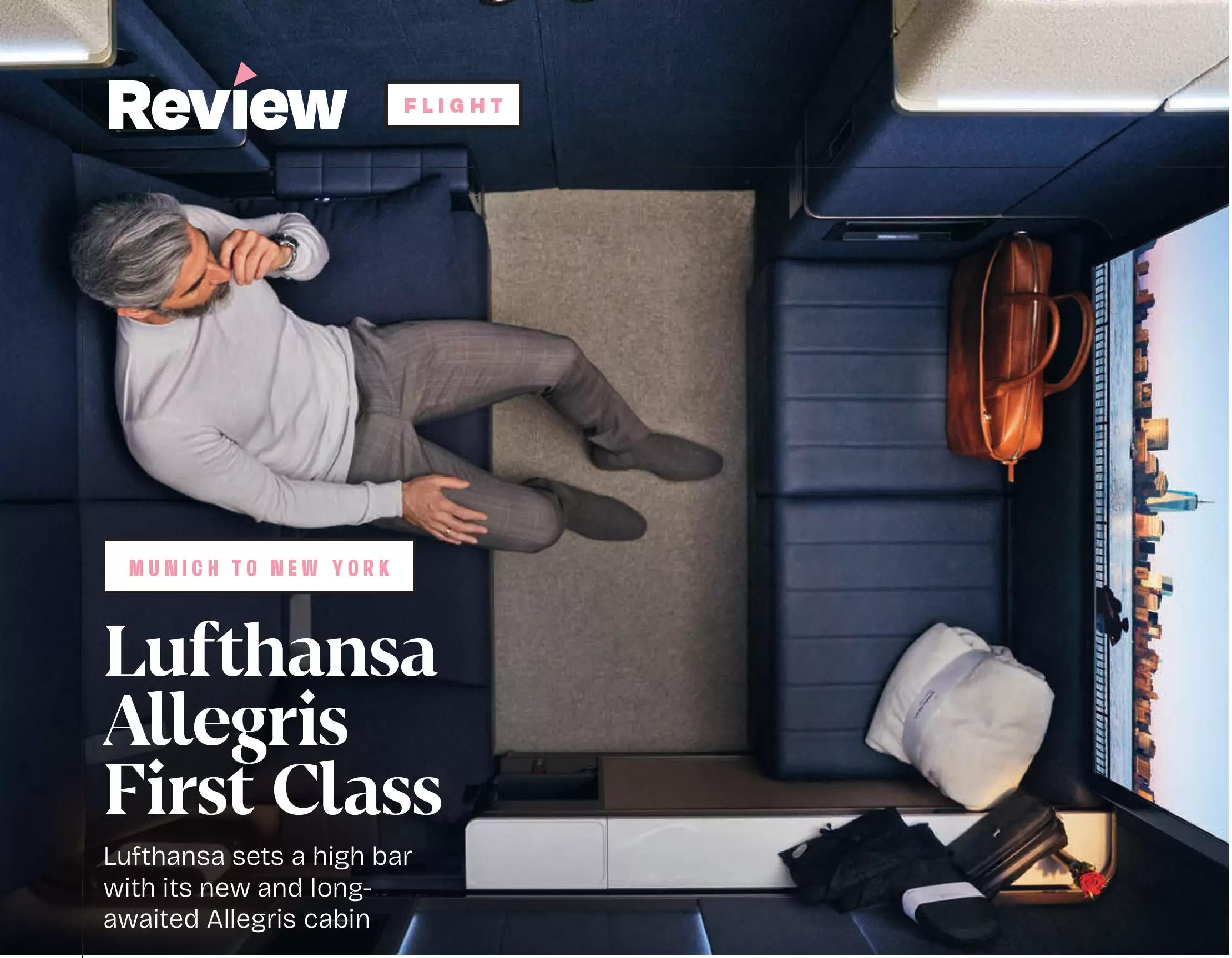
Sky-high privacy, complete with a comfortable lie-flat bed plus a delicious range of inflight dining options.

SEAT LENGTH
Approximately 78 inches

SEAT WIDTH
Approximately 22 inches

PRICE
A return business class trip from London to Hong Kong in mid-July starts from £2,821 (US$3,600)

CONTACT
cathaypacific.com



MUNICH TO NEW YORK

Lufthansa Allegris First Class

Lufthansa sets a high bar with its new and long-awaited Allegris cabin

AFTER YEARS OF eager anticipation and numerous delays stemming from certification challenges, supply chain disruptions and the intricacies of modern aircraft manufacturing, Lufthansa's Allegris First Class has taken to the skies. First unveiled in 2017 with promises of transforming the premium cabin experience, the roll-out of this innovative suite design faced several challenges. However, in November 2024, passengers on select routes to India were among the first to experience this pinnacle of German inflight luxury. I was fortunate to be on the inaugural Allegris First Class flight to North America, travelling on board one of the airline's newest Airbus A350-900s.

Boarding

Lufthansa's first class check-in area at Munich Airport's Terminal 2 is designed for seamless efficiency. A faux red carpet leads the way, and a dedicated security checkpoint ensures a swift and effortless passage. With my boarding pass saved on my phone, I was through in minutes, encountering almost no one along the way.

As this flight's sole first class passenger, I was granted priority boarding. Stepping onto the factory-fresh A350 was a breeze – no crowds, no delays, just a smooth transition from the jet bridge to my suite.

The seat

I was assigned 1A, one of three enormous suites in Lufthansa's Allegris First Class. The single suites, 1A and 1K, offer a generous 2.7 sqm of personal space, while the double suite, 1D/E, expands to an impressive 3.6 sqm. The upcoming retrofitted Boeing 747-8s will feature even more spacious configurations.

Privacy is paramount in this cabin. Each suite is enclosed by soft sliding doors, standing at 1.8m high, ensuring near total seclusion.

The seat itself is remarkably wide – 35 inches/89cm in the single suite and a staggering 49 inches/125cm in the double. They convert into fully flat beds, stretching 2m long.

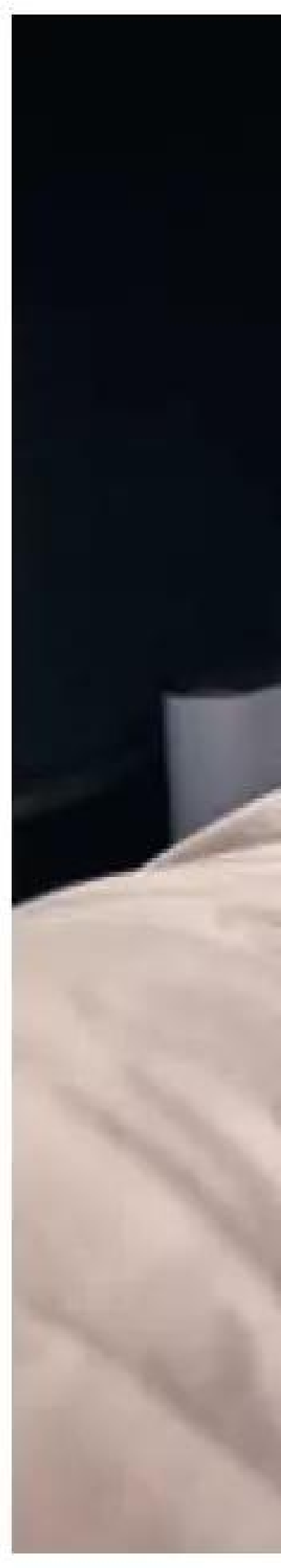
The centrepiece of the experience is the double suite, which transforms into one of the largest bed in commercial aviation – completely seamless, with no gap between the mattresses. A guest seat features a belted ottoman with a reclining backrest, making inflight companionship a comfortable option. Storage is ample, with trunk-like compartments for carry-ons and an enclosed wardrobe in every suite. However, one drawback is the lack of a dedicated, secure space to store a laptop within easy reach.

Lufthansa's Allegris First Class boasts impressive hardware, with 27-inch HD screens in the single suites and an expansive 43-inch screen in the double suite.

Each seat comes with a tablet that controls all functions, including seat heating and cooling. The airline provides premium Sennheiser Bluetooth headphones, but activating them is cumbersome, and the content selection is unfortunately rather underwhelming.

Lufthansa's inflight entertainment library is disappointingly sparse – just 187 albums and playlists, with no recent hits or major film blockbusters. In stark contrast, Emirates offers more than 3,500 audio choices, many of them top-tier selections.

However, Lufthansa redeems itself with free, high-speed wifi in first class. Business class passengers, however, must still pay for access – a policy that will change this



WORDS
ANDREAS SPAETH

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
At 49 inches, the seat is remarkably wide; first class main course; the double suite transforms into one of the largest beds in the industry

month, when messaging becomes free for all travellers.

One major caveat: this outstanding new product is rolling out at a frustratingly slow pace. By the end of 2025, just ten A350s will feature Allegris cabins, along with just two partially retrofitted Boeing 747-8s. The full retrofit won't be completed until late 2028, and even then, only a third of Lufthansa's 120 long-haul aircraft will offer first class.

The flight

Departure was delayed by 40 minutes due to de-icing, but once airborne, the experience was nothing short of exceptional. With only one passenger (me) occupying the first class cabin, the two dedicated flight attendants provided a completely personalised service.

The amenity kit, elegantly designed with a sleek, hard-case silver bag, was filled with an array of travel essentials and luxurious Doctor Babor toiletries. The brilliant sheen of the hard case adds a touch of sophistication and also serves as a practical storage solution, making it one of the most valuable collectibles I have come across in my travels.

Lufthansa's first class offers dine-on-demand, a privilege which is not extended to business class passengers. I began with a generous helping – two, in fact – of farmed Chinese Kaluga caviar, served from a 100-gram tin. The trio of appetisers was equally satisfying, but the real standout was the main course: a duet of pike-perch fillet and langoustine with beurre blanc and potato-leek purée. It may not have looked extraordinary, but it was undoubtedly one of the best seafood dishes I've had at 35,000 feet. The wine selection, however, was a mixed bag. While Lufthansa includes a top-tier Bordeaux retailing at US$100, the white-wine offerings were more modest, with a US$15 Chardonnay from South Africa.

IMAGES COURTESY OF LUFTHANSA

'Lufthansa's first class offers an exclusive dine-on-demand service'

After indulging in cheese and dessert, I stretched out in the lavish double suite, where I had one of the most restful naps I've ever experienced on a plane.

Arrival

We touched down at JFK 30 minutes behind schedule, but immigration at Terminal 1 was easy – no lines, no hassle and no checked baggage to wait for. Overall, Lufthansa's Allegris First Class suite is a meticulously designed product, with expansive dimensions, luxurious bedding and thoughtful details, which sets new standards in comfort. **BT**

VERDICT

One of the most impressive first class experiences available today. However, extremely limited availability means few travellers will get to experience it in the near future. Lufthansa does not allow upgrades into this cabin, so access is strictly for those willing to pay full fare – up to US$14,000 for a round trip.

BEST FOR

Passengers seeking the pinnacle of German engineering in a first class cabin that prioritises privacy and space.

SEAT LENGTH 80.4in/204cm
SEAT WIDTH 35-49in/89-125cm
CONTACT lufthansa.com

WORDS
ALESANDRA DUBIN

Delta One Lounge Los Angeles

A new Delta One Lounge puts guests in a Pacific frame of mind

DELTA HAS ELEVATED the art of preflight relaxation with its newly opened Delta One Lounge at Los Angeles (LAX). It's a luxurious oasis that removes the traveller from the airport chaos, offering a serene space for Delta One flyers. After the success of a flagship lounge at JFK, this 930 sqm retreat provides intimacy, exclusivity and comfort.

Location

The lounge is in Terminal 3 at LAX, conveniently adjacent to the Delta Sky Club. It's perfectly situated for Delta's premium passengers, offering easy access from the Delta One check-in area. Travellers can bypass crowds and glide directly into the space via a private elevator. A bespoke fragrance immediately transports visitors into a haven of calm, setting the tone for the entire experience.

Access options

The lounge is available to Delta One passengers, and passengers flying on select partner airlines in premium cabins, including Air France, LATAM, KLM, Korean Air and Virgin Atlantic.

The space

The new lounge is smaller than its JFK counterpart but packs a luxurious punch. The 200-seat space features decor inspired by the hues of a Los Angeles sunset. The Icon Bar, with its leather and walnut accents and a quartzite and onyx backbar, draws on the colours of the Pacific coastline. Architectural details pay homage to LA's eclectic mix of art deco and modernism.

One of the standout areas is the library lounge, perfect for dining or catching up on work. If you're in the mood for fresh air, an outdoor terrace offers Delta's signature Missoni pillows and sweeping tarmac views.

Food and drink

This lounge features a top-tier dining experience with a menu that rotates regularly. I started with a smooth truffle parsnip soup, followed by a delicious salmon dish with haricots verts.

FROM TOP: The lounge offers a spacious terrace with runway views; the dessert table; one of the main dining rooms inside the lounge

The culinary choices offer plenty of variety, from crispy duck tacos to roasted corn pizza. Delta also offers location-themed bento boxes, with dishes representing Paris, Tokyo and Boston. The bar adds another layer of fun with cocktails named after airport codes, such as a Tahiti (PPT) mai tai or a London (LHR) gin.

Amenities

Delta's attention to detail doesn't stop at food. The lounge includes eight private wellness pods, equipped with zero-gravity and full-body massage chairs. A special lamp in this area helps travellers acclimatise to time zones. The relaxation area offers premium skincare products by Grown Alchemist to help combat the effects of long-haul travel. **BT**

BEST FOR

Passengers seeking to relax and enjoy a three-course meal before a long-haul or transcon flight.

VERDICT

This lounge is an intimate and sophisticated space, featuring decor inspired by Los Angeles and carefully curated food and drink options. Whether you're looking for a moment of peace in a wellness pod or want to enjoy a signature cocktail while watching planes take off, Delta One at LAX is the perfect preflight retreat.
delta.com

WORDS
STEVE WHITE

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Art installation in the lobby; Harbour premier king room; a rather upscale minibar

Mondrian Hong Kong

Arty stay in the heart of Hong Kong

Background
The Mondrian brand of founder-built hotels is part of a trend in hospitality to offer artsy, eclectic alternatives to cookie-cutter city stays. The vibe and facilities of the Mondrian Hong Kong are not those of your typical business venue; instead the hotel leans into its sense of place and embraces its artistic licence.

What's it like?
Opened at the end of 2023, the Mondrian is secreted amid the bars and cafes of Hart Avenue, Tsim Sha Tsui. This leaves it just a couple of blocks from the famous Victoria Harbour, granting sea and city views from many of the rooms.

An aquatic theme is present in the decor throughout, with illuminated rings of bubbles rising from the reception area, helping to give the hotel an airy and bright first impression.

The walls on each floor add further whimsy, offering a Jules Verne-ian vision of life under an enchanted sea. In this octopus's garden, the octopus has a rabbit's head; you'll also spot a moose-whale, a fishicken and a puffer-crab.

Rooms
The 324 rooms and suites are more cosy than expansive. Regular rooms run from 21 sqm to 32 sqm. I stayed in one of the 12 Harbour suites, which have a lounge and second bathroom, to stretch to 49 sqm.

There's a strong contemporary feel overall. A liquorice-striped table with great views (a table rather than a desk) is accompanied by Mondrian-esque colour in the seats and rugs. Other furnishings and finishes show keen knowledge of the local vernacular, which will please those with close ties to the city.

The suites come with a stylish lacquered drinks cabinet complete with bar sets for crafting cocktails, as well as a water purifier, high-speed internet and Malin + Goetz bathroom products.

Food and drink
Cocktail bar Avoca is the focal point for meetings with seating options ranging from quieter snugs to seats at the bar.

The Hong Kong-themed cocktails include what I found to be the oral pleasure of a tonsil-tickling *haam neng mung* (an unusual take on local favourite salted lemonade).

If instead you want to put the meat into your meetings, head to Carna, where ebullient Italian chef Dario Cecchini is an unabashed carnivore who glories in platters of beef twice the size of your head. A healthy appetite is essential, preferably at least two of them so you can share. **BT**

DON'T MISS

Views of one of the world's great harbours from amid the Blade Runner-esque TST skyline.

BEST FOR

Meat-lovers, aquanauts and old Hong Kong hands.

VERDICT

A stay to tickle arty types with quirky spaces encouraging creativity rather than boardroom presentations.

PRICE
Internet rates for a mid-week stay in July start at HK$1,530 (US$200).

CONTACT
8A, Hart Avenue, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon
+852 3550 0388
mondrianhotels.com

HOTEL **Review**

WORDS
ENRIQUE PERRELLA

Grand Hyatt Seoul

A touch of class downtown

What's it like?
Opened in 1978 as a Hyatt Regency and rebranded in 1993, the Grand Hyatt Seoul is a flagship property that blends timeless elegance with a distinct Asian flair. Perched on the slopes of Namsan, it offers sweeping city views, a peaceful setting near the business district and proximity to embassies and parks. The expansive lobby, adorned with curated art and soaring ceilings, sets a refined tone from the moment of arrival. Warm welcomes from staff and polished service underscore the hotel's commitment to hospitality. The nearest subway is within walking distance, making city exploration easy.

Rooms
Guest rooms strike a fine balance between comfort and understated luxury. Floor-to-ceiling windows flood the space with natural light, while a soothing palette and smart layout offer a sense of calm. Highlights include a Toto Washlet smart toilet, an intuitive pocket-door system, and a well-appointed Nespresso station. While the minibar is well-stocked, prices are steep. A standout amenity is the in-room water dispenser with hot, cold and ambient temperature settings – charmingly accompanied by a jaunty melody at every use.

Facilities
The hotel excels in both wellness and leisure offerings. A 23m indoor pool, full-service spa and a comprehensive fitness centre cater to health-minded guests. The gym is particularly well-maintained and generously equipped, with headphones, towels and sanitising wipes at the ready. In winter, the outdoor pool transforms into an ice-skating rink – an enchanting seasonal touch. The on-site art tour, available via self-guided brochure, showcases the hotel's impressive collection.

Dining is another highlight. The Terrace, the hotel's breakfast venue, offers a wide international spread, though Asian options are curiously limited. Standouts include a made-to-order egg station, freshly baked pastries, and quality charcuterie. The 322 Sowol-ro steak house impresses with Australian Wagyu tenderloin, duck fat fries and a tray of custom sauces and mustards. Guests can also select their own steak knife, an engaging and unique detail. A ground-floor coffee shop rounds out the food offerings with snacks, tea, and wine – though early risers may find limited options before dawn. **BT**

FROM TOP: King River View room; spectacular views from The Terrace, which has seven live buffet stations

GOOD-TO-KNOW

The hotel is bookable with World of Hyatt points, often yielding better value than cash rates, which frequently surpass US$300 per night. Global members can expect generous upgrades.

DON'T MISS

Tucking in at 322 Sowol-ro steak house.

BEST FOR

Adding a dash of style to a business trip.

VERDICT

The Grand Hyatt Seoul is a grande dame of luxury hospitality rich in character, art and attentive service. It is a restful yet connected stay in the heart of the city. While the breakfast could use a broader range of Asian dishes, the overall experience is exceptional. It's a smart choice for business travellers, families and World of Hyatt members looking to maximise both comfort and value.

PRICE

Internet rates for a room in July (midweek) start at W275,000 (US$190)

CONTACT

322 Sowol-ro
Hannam-dong, Yongsan-gu
Seoul 04347
+82 2 797 1234
hyatt.com

STORY BY
JEREMY TAYLOR

Toyota Land Cruiser

Toyota brings back a rugged classic

JEEP, BRONCO, LAND Rover – the current crop of off-road SUVs is a drive down a very bumpy memory lane. All rely heavily on retro styling and nostalgia, so it's no surprise that Toyota has just brought back the legendary Land Cruiser.

The Japanese marque withdrew its go-anywhere V-8 4x4 from the US in 2021 after 60 years (earlier than 2021 in some markets). This new model looks every inch as desirable as a Land Rover Defender or Jeep Wrangler, with all the hallmarks of a proper dirt-track icon.

While the old, hardcore Land Cruiser proved its mettle with the United Nations in trouble hotspots, the 2025 version also targets the needs of the modern motorist. Drive modes, an infotainment system and creature comforts are all part of the package.

Most importantly, the latest Land Cruiser is astonishingly good off-road, built on an old-school ladder-frame chassis with the body mounted on top. Need to tow? The Toyota can haul a massive 2,720kg.

Instead of a V-8 engine, power comes from a four-cylinder, 2.4-litre hybrid capable of 326hp and good for approximately 23 mpg. Choose from the 1958 version at around US$57,900, or the higher-specification Land Cruiser model at around US$63,900.

Both are loaded with heated steering wheel and seats but the cheaper version misses out on a ten-speaker stereo and makes use of a smaller, eight-inch touch screen. Interestingly, the base 1958 model is fitted with retro round headlights rather than the modern rectangular units on the Land Cruiser version.

The Toyota can't match a Defender for on-road comfort but it is a better drive than the Wrangler or the Bronco. Off-road, it's a split decision over the best vehicle for navigating an unpaved surface. **BT**

GROUND FORCE The Land Cruiser's signature Multi-Terrain Select allows drivers to navigate various landscapes with improved traction

IMAGES **COURTESY OF TOYOTA**

Home sweet home?

A Hong Kong high-rise housing estate may offer a glimpse into the future

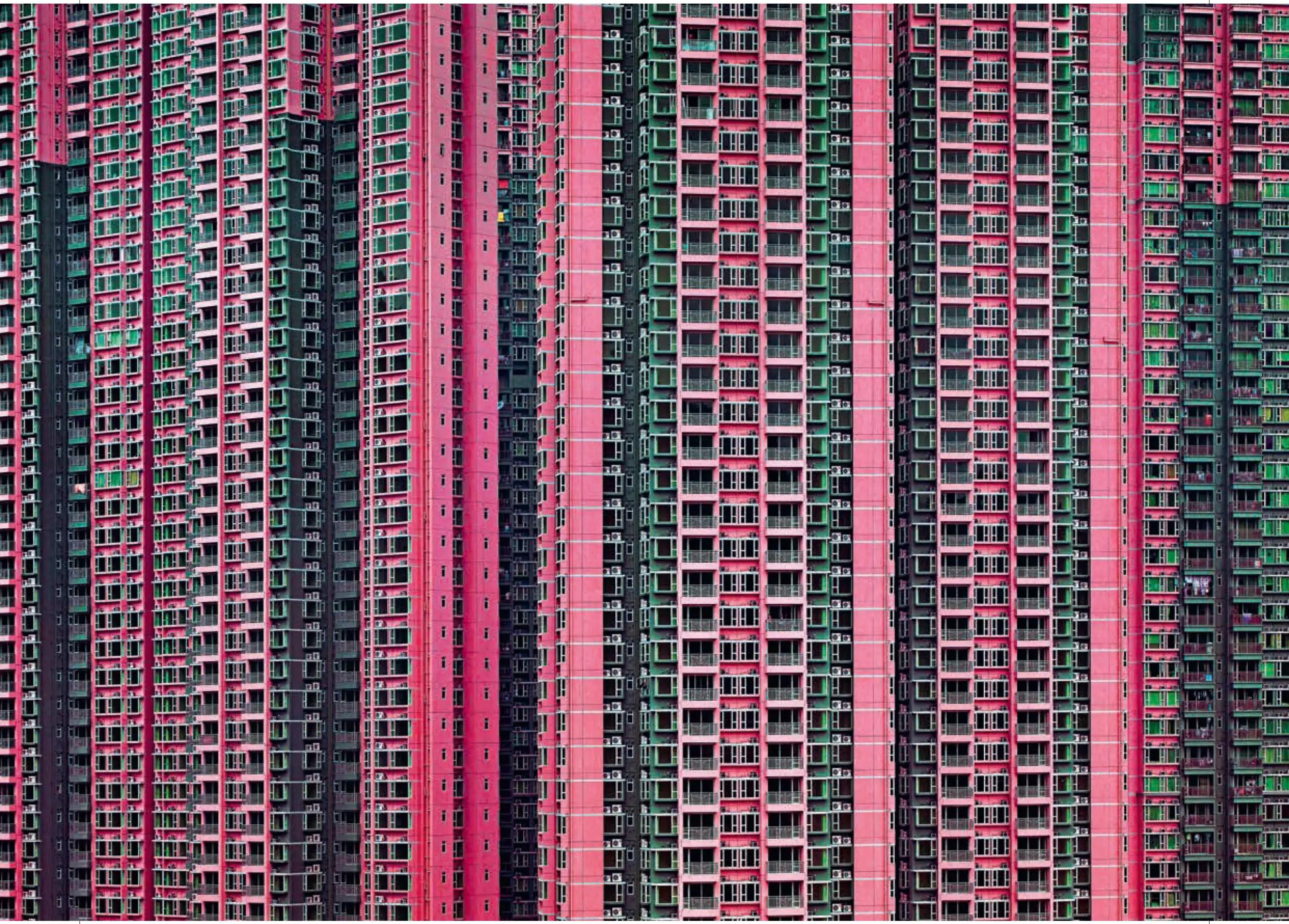


IMAGE © ESTATE OF MICHAEL WOLF

MICHAEL WOLF (1954-2019) was a celebrated photographer who spent the latter years of his life in Hong Kong. As well as photographing sunrises on Cheung Chau, the beautiful outlying island he made his home, he spent much time in the city, capturing scenes of everyday, unremarkable life, such as mops drying on railings. In doing so he gave these scenes poignancy; he now gives us pause for thought.

He is perhaps best known for his photographs of Hong Kong's dense forests of high-rise residential buildings. In this mesmerising picture, from his ***Architecture of Density*** series, one such collection of buildings looks like a vision of a dystopian future – yet it very much belongs in the present. Only the presence of laundry, hung out to dry in some of the shoebox flats, betrays the presence of human life.

Wolf's work is represented by Flowers Gallery in Hong Kong. **BT**

photomichaelwolf.com

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